

Love With Shoes On

By Darrell Champlin

Why missions? That's the first question I ask my students in the schools and the missions classes.

Now beloved, we're worried about a lot of different things in this world today. We're concerned about inflation. We see it reach five percent, and suddenly the whole financial structure of the United States starts to tremble. The stock market begins to crash, and we tremble with fear. The fact of the matter is, beloved, that every other nation in the world would be very happy to exchange our five percent inflation for theirs. You can put your money in the bank in the land of Brazil at 100 percent interest, and you would be a fool, for by the end of the year you would have lost that money many times over. Argentina has inflation of a thousand percent. Surinam is running between fifty and one hundred percent.

We're frightened by the takeover of American companies by foreign interests. We're concerned about the buying of American land, and the buying of American businesses and banks by foreign nations.

We're concerned about AIDS. I heard the other day that one church wanted to take a group of people to one of the countries of Africa. The moms and dads wouldn't let their teenagers go because they were afraid their teenagers would catch AIDS. We have to admit, beloved, AIDS is a problem.

We have to admit that AIDS may kill its thousands, it may kill its millions, but beloved, there's a plague far greater across the land. A plague across this world. It will not kill just thousands, not just millions. There's a plague, beloved, that can be spelled with three simple letters. S-I-N. A plague of sin, that not only will kill millions but 3 billion precious souls unless something is done to reach them with the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ before it is too late. Sin: the greatest and most terrible plague that afflicts this world. It sweeps like a flood, carrying all before it. Sin! The death angel. Sin! Death! And that, beloved, is the reason for missions.

Do you realize that the Bible is a textbook of missions? Have you thought that this entire Bible, minus four chapters -- the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, and the last two chapters of the book of Revelation -- is full, from chapter 3 of Genesis to chapter 20 of Revelation, with the message and history of sin? And a mighty, powerful, righteous, holy God, reaching down through the blood of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ to save men from sin? An entire Bible, beloved, that is nothing but a textbook of missions. A history of the heartbeat of the God of heaven.

We were visiting a little church in North Carolina. I was invited to bring a special message, an extra message in a conference, and we had a double header that night. One of our dear friends, Ann Duckworth, stood to sing, in her inimitable southern voice. She sang until our hearts were broken, until tears were streaming down our faces. "Oh tell me that Name again. Oh tell me that Name, that glorious, that matchless, that awesome, that beautiful, that magnificent, that graceful Name of Jesus again." Our hearts broke before the power of that message.

Beloved, do we exult in our Lord Jesus Christ? I see some who are accustomed to raising their hands. What are they doing? They're exulting in that matchless, blessed, incomparable name of Jesus Christ. They're letting Him know, beloved. Some of us say it with our hearts, others say it with our hands. Why, we become so filled with it that even those of us who can't sing lift up our voices and say, "My Jesus I love Thee, I know Thou art mine, for Thee all the folly of sin I resign." We turn to the world and say, "Please, look upon Jesus. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

Then when our hearts, beloved, are so full we have nothing more we can say, we just have to lift our hands to Him and say, "Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature, oh Thou of God and man the Son, Thee will I honor, Thee will I cherish, Thou my soul's joy, glory, and crown." Oh, tell me that Name again.

I'm here tonight to remind you of those 3 billion who are crying "Oh tell me that Name just once! Just once!" 3 billion on their way to a Christless eternity, who have yet to hear a single time the blessed message of the gospel which we find in the matchless Word of God. 3,000,000,000 of them.

Now how many is a billion? Well, a mathematician would say a thousand million. But how do we get our minds around a thousand million? Perhaps there's a better way. Perhaps we could just imagine we have the power to turn history back. Just push the 1980's back into oblivion so they didn't exist anymore. Throw the 1970's to the sky as though they never happened. Push the calendar back into the 1960's -- 5, 4, 3, 2 -- back into the 1950's. Begin turning the years of the calendar back. '57, '56, '55, '54. Beloved, when we've turned history back to 1953, we would have turned history back one billion seconds. That's right. It takes 36 years to accumulate one billion seconds. What does that mean? That means that we have today,

beloved, across this world, lost souls who have yet to hear the message of the gospel for the first time crying "No man careth for my soul." The equivalent of one hundred eight years of seconds.

And they're dying: 143 a minute. They're dying of the plague of sin: 8,580 an hour. And they're dying of the scourge of Satan: 205,920 a day. They're dying of the wages of sin: 1,440,400 every week. They're dying, beloved, crying "No man careth for my soul."

Why missions?

3 billion would, if they stood shoulder to shoulder, circle this globe 44 times around. 3 billion on their way to a Christless eternity. Do you think that's bad? Is that awesome? Is that almost mind-boggling? Then consider this. It took, from the dawn of recorded history so far as we know until 1830, to accumulate until there are 1 billion people alive on the face of this globe at the same time. But it took only 103 years, until 1933, to reach 2, and then only 27, until 1960, to reach 3. And then only 17 years, to 1977, to reach 4. Then only 10, 1987, to reach 5. By the year 1992 there will be six billion people, and by the year 2000 there will be seven billion people on the face of this globe. At that time, beloved, unless something happens, there will be five billion people across this earth who are still crying "Oh tell me that Name just once! Oh tell me that Name for the first time!" 5 billion of them. Enough to circle this globe 77 times around.

Why missions?

Because the lost are dying.

But there's a greater reason, beloved.

Why missions?

Because we love our Lord Jesus. Do you realize when you take this book, this matchless Word of God, and begin to read it, begin to suffuse your life with it, when you begin to be filled with the reading, and the direction, and blessing, of the Word of God in your life, that you begin to know Him? As you begin to know Him, you begin to grow in His likeness. And the amazing, matchless Lord Jesus that we meet in the Scriptures becomes the object of our love. Becomes the object of our passion. Becomes the very darling of our lives. He becomes the root of our being, the very foundation of our existence. And as we grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, something happens to us. The heartbeat of God begins to throb within our very veins.

I won't take time to preach a message like that to you tonight -- we'll be here until midnight. But let me just summarize. When it happens young man, when it happens Dad, when it happens Mom, the very heartbeat of God begins to throb within your heart, and you find blazing in your heart a passion that cannot be quenched. You find blazing in your very being a vision that cannot be dimmed. And what is that vision? The vision of the glory and the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The vision of those being brought out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, into the Light of God. The vision of the establishment of a Kingdom throughout eternity, of the saved and sanctified children of the God of heaven, the family of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It becomes an obsession that cannot be denied. A destination, the fulfillment of that task, and the bringing in of lost souls into the presence of the God of heaven, that will not be abandoned.

The very heartbeat of God: A passion that cannot be quenched. An obsession that cannot be denied. A vision that cannot be dimmed. A destination, the enthronement of our matchless God with a people to worship Him for eternity, that will not be abandoned.

And that, beloved, is why I'd like to talk with you tonight for a little while about love. Because it begins right there. Not a pumped up love, but a love that comes from being immersed in this glorious Book, and allowing the Spirit of God to accomplish in my life and in yours that which God has determined, as mentioned here in the book of Romans. A verse with which we're all very familiar.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. ⁱ

When the passion of God begins to burn in our hearts then you young men, one after another, filled with a passion that cannot be quenched, lighted with a vision that cannot be dimmed, ablaze with an obsession that cannot be denied, filled with the destination of the exultation of your God, will march across this world as an army. You young ladies will be by their sides. You dads and moms will be on you knees crying out for the power of God upon them, and pouring out of the resources God gives you to send the gospel across the world. Because you love your Lord Jesus. That's where it begins. And that's where we begin tonight. Open your Bibles with me to John 21:15-19

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas lovestii thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I loveiii thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him,

Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth the hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.^{iv}

I've had the joy of preaching the gospel since I was seventeen years old, forty years ago. Well, maybe before that time, when I was twelve. I was called to be a missionary when I was twelve years of age, saved when I was nine. I remember at the age of twelve standing on the street corners preaching the gospel to the neighborhood boys and girls. My doctrine wasn't that good. I told them if they didn't believe Jesus right now, the sidewalk was going to open up and swallow them into hell. Well, my doctrine wasn't perfect, but I had the right idea. Starting at 17 I began to preach and had the joy of seeing souls saved and a church started. At 18 I went out to Las Vegas, Nevada, and was instrumental in getting a church started there. Then Louise robbed the cradle. When I was 19 we got married. We went on our honeymoon in Jerome, Idaho. Some folks there wanted to have a daily vacation Bible school and evangelistic services in a Grange hall, and they wanted us to hold them. So we did. Out of that group came the Grace Baptist church of Twin Falls Idaho. So while still teenagers we saw God bless in the salvation of many, many folks. Mostly white folks, although I did go to a little place called Evergreen, a suburb of Los Angeles. There we saw the black folk. We'd gather a big crowd on buses and what have you, and bus them in. I preached to them. I learned there how to sing in the African manner. Nice, slow, and stately, as our people just enjoy singing. But most of the folks we saw saved before going to the mission field were white.

I believe we've seen a number of different colors of folks who have come to Christ as their Savior. Over in the Belgian Congo, Africa, God gave us several thousand who came to Him as their Savior back there in the deep jungle. Saw God give us thirteen churches, seven schools, and thirty-six preachers to train from reading and writing right up from scratch to serve and glorify Him.

We were just jungle rats. We lived in a mud stick house, dirt floors, no screens or glass, just holes in the wall for windows and a big opening in the back for a back door. I don't know how many billion or trillion termites there were eating us out of house and home. We had two resident snakes. We watched those snakes crawl across the top of the walls, looking them over pretty good. But we decided they were more danger to the cockroaches, centipedes, scorpions, tarantulas, and the rest of the things crawling around our house than they were to us. We did kill the cobras when they came in the living room. And we killed a ten foot viper when it invaded the kitchen. And we took care of the snakes in the pots. But we couldn't do anything about the leopard that looked at us through the hole in the wall that we called our bedroom window while we were asleep on our bed. Of course, we were protected by our mosquito nets! Just jungle rats.

We lived on \$28 a month for six years. We'd buy enough flour to bake one loaf of bread a week. We'd bake it on Saturday, eat it on Sunday as our American style meal for the week. We bought Palm Oil, that heavy, yellow, fatty oil. You're supposed to die from cholesterol from that; it's supposed to be one of the worst. Didn't kill us. We ate the leaf of the Cassava plant as our main vegetable. Cassava is their substitute for potatoes. They called the leaf's mpondu out there. We ate it seven days a week for six years running. I shot all the meat we ate. Everything from pigeons to elephant. I could tell you all kinds of horrifying stories of elephants, leopards, and snakes out there, but that's not our purpose tonight. We were just jungle rats.

What a tremendous time of seeing black folk come to know Christ personally. Seeing churches established. Men praying. Glorious times. Then in 1965 we went down to the land of Surinam, South America. There we have a church that has five races in it. We have blacks from Africa, yellows from Asia, browns from India, the red aborigines out of the jungles, and a few whites. In that one church are red, brown, yellow, black, and white just like the little chorus we sing. So we've seen, beloved, a number of different colors of Christians.

But I think we've only seen two kinds. I'd like to call one of those kinds Psalm 23 Christians. You can take Psalm 23 and put it as a circumference around their entire lives. If you asked them their testimony they speak of the joy of knowing God as their Father, of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, the Holy Spirit as their Comforter and Guide. They talk about God's succor in times of sorrow. They talk about His strength in times of weakness. They talk about His supply in times of need. All of those glorious

experiences we have. 33 miraculous things, beloved, that happen in the life of everyone who is truly born again into the family of God.

I like to describe it to the people of South America as a great lake, deep and wide, filled with the love and mercy and majesty and blessing of the God of heaven, but dammed by our sin. Then Jesus hangs upon Calvary's cross and cries "It is finished." God reaches down with a mighty fist and breaches that dam. God's flood of mercy begins to pour through, the dam begins to crumble. At last it topples and we're caught up in a mighty wave of the blessing and mercy of God. Vance Havner, I believe, once described it as the waterspout of God. Glorious, glorious, experience.

But I'm here beloved to remind you that's not all. For there's another kind of Christianity. We read of it in Psalm 24, and about verse 6. Lift up your head, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

And then it seems the scene shifts. Our Lord is hung upon Calvary's cross. He's been buried, and raised again for our justification. Now He's headed back to glory through the realm of the principality of the powers of the air, and the Satanic forces descend upon Him. He casts them from Himself in mighty triumph. Now He's approaching the ramparts of Glory. There the angels by the myriad are assembled, and they lift up the shout. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates. And be ye lift up ye everlasting doors. And our King, our King of glory, shall come in." The question echoes, "Who is this King?" Then the answer thunders, "The Lord of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth, General of the hosts of the universe, He is our King of glory."

And that, beloved, is what Jesus was talking to Peter about. "Peter, Satan attacked me in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah. He stood and declared to the universe five blasphemous 'I wills'. He summarized them in the fifth in which he said 'I will be as the Most High God. I will dethrone El Elyon, Master of the universe, and I'll reign on His throne.'" Of course the Lord threw him out. War began to rage.

Now our Lord Jesus has died upon Calvary's cross. He purchased our redemption. Now the first salvo, the first return salvo of the God of heaven was being fired. "Peter, we're going to war. I say to you, Peter, looking down through the corridor of the time of your life, if you take up the gauntlet of caring for My lambs, if you take up the responsibility of feeding My sheep, there's going to be scorn, ridicule, hatred, persecution. In fact, Peter, I'm looking down toward the end of your life." That's verse 18 and 19, is it not? "I'm looking down toward the end of your life. Peter, they're going to take hold of you and carry you where you would not go. They're going to do with you that which you would not have done. In fact, Peter, they're going to kill you for My name's sake. Now Peter, do you love Me that way?"

For he asked Peter, you see, in John 21, verse 15, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" You already know, likely, that the word love the Lord Jesus used when He asked Peter "Do you love Me?" is not the same word Peter used when he said, "Yes, Lord, I love You." Two different words, both correctly translated love, but two different kinds of love. We learned the definition of the kind of love Jesus was asking Peter for way back there in school. We call it commonly today Agape love. Listen to this definition: "Love is a desire for, and a delight in, the well being of the one loved leading to active and self-sacrificing efforts on their behalf."

There's a church down in Chillicothe Ohio that has a tremendous ministry among the students on the campus at Athens and also at Ohio State and Columbus. They go on that campus and hold Bible studies in the dorms. They get the students together and teach them the Bible. They see the campus prostitutes saved. They see the dope addicts saved. They see the hippies saved. They see those that are doomed to death through drugs and alcohol saved. They bring them out, assembled together each year by the hundreds, and have a Bible conference. Dr. French of Grace Theological Seminary was the Bible teacher one year, and I was the missionary speaker. Dr. French went back into the book of First John, and he took this same love -- Agape -- and he defined it this way: Love with shoes on.

"Peter, there's war ahead. There's scorn and ridicule and beatings and stoning and jail and death ahead. Peter, I'm looking for soldiers. I'm looking for men who will suffer. I'm looking for men who will sacrifice. I'm looking for men who will separate themselves from the things of this world. I'm looking for men who will subject themselves to My will. I'm looking for men who will serve. I'm looking for men, Peter, who will soldier. Now Peter, will you get on your boots, and will you march for Me?"

And it happened. In Acts chapter four, as soon as Peter had taken up the gauntlet of the service of the God of heaven he was arrested. In Acts 5 he's arrested again, and beaten. In Acts 12 he's in prison, now awaiting beheading in the morning. God's people are in the house of John Mark crying out "Oh God! You

let them kill James. Please, please, Lord, don't let them kill Peter! Please, Lord, deliver Peter." God hears. He sends an angel in the middle of the night and leads Peter out through locked walls.

"Peter, there's war ahead! Now will you get on your boots? Peter, is there a man here who will subject himself to the will of God? Peter, is there a man here who will suffer for the God of heaven? Peter will you sacrifice? Will you separate from the things of the world? Will you soldier, Peter? Do you love Me with shoes on?"

Peter's response? "Yes, Lord Jesus, I love you with a warm hearted affection."

Again, and again, and again, our matchless Lord comes to us and says, "My daughter, My son, do you love Me? How do you love Me?" Again, and again, and again, we give Him Peter's reply. When it's time to separate from the things of the world, when it's time to sacrifice, when it's time to subject ourselves to the will of God, when it's time to serve, when it's time to soldier, so often, beloved, we give Him Peter's reply.

I've been thinking back on our experience for the past many years on the mission fields of Africa and South America, the past 35 years or so. I would like to just bring some of those experiences to you where our Lord has come to us and asked us "Do you love Me? How do you love Me?"

Back in 1979 we had a prayer card, across the top of which were written the words "Three generations of missionaries -- from 1917 to 1979." I'd see young people pick up that card, and look at it. They'd look at me, and they'd look at it again. I could see the wheels turning. They're trying to figure out if that old geezer went all the way back to 1917. I plead innocent. That was my father-in-law, Daddy Grings. In 1917 he sailed for the land of Zaire, Africa, then the Belgium Congo. On the same ship was a young lady who was to be his wife. After three years they were married, and began to raise a family, back in the deep jungles, beloved, in situations that even we who have lived in primitive situations really cannot imagine. Virtually no money, living off the land, traveling on foot or bicycle through the dark, infested jungles of Zaire.

They continued that ministry until the late 1920's, and then returned to the United States for furlough. There in Lynn Haven, Florida, my wife was born while Daddy Grings, as he was called, was helping Bob Jones, Sr. establish the first campus of Bob Jones University. In 1933 the Lord spoke to Daddy Grings that it was time to go back to Africa. They looked until they found an old wooden sailing ship, a four masted schooner, and they boarded that ship. It had no radio, it had no auxiliary power, nothing but sails. It had no refrigeration. They took live animals like chickens on board to eat on the way over.

For two months they tacked their way back and forth, following where they could get the wind until at last after two months they were 200 miles off the coast of Africa. They were filling with water. The captain came to them and said, "We're leaking and our pumps are frozen. We're going to sink. You'd better pray." For three days they prayed. On the third day that ship was listing so heavily the great masts of the ship were almost touching the water, and they were in danger of turning turtle. The captain said "We've got to get off today." No radio! They took everything flammable, piled it on the deck of that ship and soaked it in kerosene. They tied long ropes to the two little inadequate life boats (one was just a rowboat) in order to keep those boats from drifting too far from the blazing signal they were about to set. They got into those lifeboats and set fire to the ship. That column of smoke going up into the sky was their only hope of rescue.

It was getting dark. The waves were huge, and they were bailing for their lives. Water was swamping their boats. They were too heavy, even just them with nothing, nothing but the clothes on their backs, and they were sinking. They were going to die, and as it grew dark they were crying out to God when in the last glimmer of twilight they saw the masts of a ship on the horizon. They prayed God that it was headed their way. They bailed, and they battled, till there in the pitch darkness of the billows of that ocean they heard the rumble of the Dutch ship Hercules' engines. The captain hove to and began to play the beam of his spotlight over the billows and located, still near that burning hulk of the ship, those two little lifeboats.

He took them aboard. They asked, "How did you find us?" He responded "Three days ago such a strong wind began to blow on the bow of my ship that I couldn't maintain my course, and I changed it. That wind kept thrusting against me, and I changed it again. It kept on pushing, and I changed it again. It brought me right to you." They stood on the deck of that ship and watched everything they had in this world burn up and go as ashes to the bottom of the Atlantic ocean.

Tragedy? No. Just the Lord Jesus looking down upon a missionary family and asking them, "Do you love Me? How do you love Me?"

That ship brought them all the way back to Puerto Rico, going the wrong direction. Now they were back where they had started and they had nothing but the clothes on their backs. Mama Grings said,

“Daddy, maybe God doesn’t want us in Africa anymore.” But Daddy said, “Yes Mama, God wants us there, but He didn’t want us there with all that baggage. He wanted us light so we can go out and reach people who’ve never been reached with the gospel before.” They sailed again, beloved, with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Tragedy? No. Just a missionary family looking into the face of the God of heaven and crying, “Oh God, oh my Lord, we love You. With shoes on.”

They made it the second time. They trekked a thousand miles back in the jungle. They built themselves a little bark house. Stripped the bark off the trees and flattened it out. They tied it with vines to the stakes driven in the ground. The floor was dirt. In the center was a pit where they tried to store things and where Daddy Grings was bitten by a poisonous snake. The bedrooms were on top of a reed mat that was reeds tied across to make a ceiling so that the leopards, hyenas, snakes, and the other things that prowl at night couldn’t get them. That was home. For the next three years they trekked that jungle land hundreds of miles on foot preaching the Gospel in every village. After three years not one soul had come to Christ.

Then the Lord Jesus came to them once again and asked them “Do you love Me?” How do you love me? Mrs. Grings became ill with Malaria. It turned into Blackwater Fever, so called because you bleed to death through your kidneys and your urine is black with blood. They were thirty days’ march from the nearest doctor.

She died.

They had no boards with which to make a coffin. So they took a hollowed out log in which they’d been catching rain water off their thatch roof, and cleaned it up. They lay the body of their beloved mother in that hollow log and covered her with banana leaves.

The people of that area were terrified. This was the first white woman and the first white children they had ever seen. The people were petrified. They came to watch but were afraid to help. They watched as that woman’s sons dug the grave for their own mother. They watched as her husband held a burial service for his own wife. They watched as my wife, then 8 years old, stood on the edge of her mother’s grave and said “I’m not afraid of death. My mommy knew Jesus, and she’s up there in heaven. I know Him too and someday I’m going to see her up there in heaven.”

The next morning five young men came and said, “Missionary, we want to be Christians.”

“Oh, why did you wait so long?”

“We’re watching you, missionary. The message you preached sounded like it was good for living, but we weren’t sure it was good for dying. Now we know it’s good for dying.”

Tragedy? Naw. Just the blessed Lord Jesus looking down to a missionary family and asking them once again “Do you love Me? How?”

Then letters began to come. “Daddy Grings, you can’t raise five children in the jungle without a mother.” You know, letters like that come a lot. Every time there’s trouble on the mission field. Every time there’s war, and we’ve lived through three of them. All the villages within a 50 mile radius of where we live in the jungle have been shot to ribbons. They are wilderness. They’re ghost towns. We’re the only village left in a whole 50 mile area in the terrible war we’ve been having to overthrow a Marxist military dictatorship that took over 9 years ago. The letters come. “It’s too dangerous out there,” they say. They forget that we’re serving Jehovah Sabaoth, General of the hosts of the universe. It wasn’t too dangerous for Daniel in the lion’s den. It wasn’t too dangerous for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace. No, beloved, because the General was with them.

Daddy Grings got his children together, and said, “Kids, they want us to come home. They say I can’t raise you here in the jungle without a mother. What do you want to do?” Those children said, “Daddy, we came to Africa as missionaries, and we intend to stay as missionaries.”

For ten years, beloved, they never again had a house. For ten years, on foot and bicycle, they trekked from village to village to village . . .

Tragedy? No. Just a missionary family looking into the face of their Lord and crying, “Yes Lord Jesus, we love You with shoes on.”

But they did finally come home so the children could finish high school. They had been having home school. Know what kind? This Book. My wife read this Book through by the time she was eight. She learned to read when she was four. Daddy Grings saw to it that his children learned whole books of the Bible, chapters and verses by the score. They imbibed the very heartbeat of the God of heaven.

“Daddy, we came to Africa as missionaries, and we’re going to stay as missionaries.”

Passion that cannot be quenched. An obsession that cannot be denied. A vision that cannot be dimmed. A destination, the enthronement of their Lord that they will not abandon.

Louise and I met, and sailed in 1954 with our little son, a year and a half old, David. And as I mentioned, glorious, glorious ten years. But then our Lord came to us, and He allowed the Simba revolution of 1964 to break out. They swept across the land pillaging, raping, murdering, and destroying everything in their path. They separated us from our children. Swept in and burned all of our churches and schools. Massacred twenty of our pastors and murdered hundreds of our Christians. Our children were back there, trapped with Louise's brothers and their families. We were out there, the two of us, at a landing strip, helping with the refugees. I was standing on the wings of the planes pouring gasoline in, refilling the twin Otters and the other planes that were coming in. Louise was helping with the feeding and the caring for of these refugees. I'll never forget the nuns, who would get off of those planes with visions of their priests being hacked in pieces still before their faces. Of their buildings burning and the aluminum roofs turning into long aluminum icicles melted down over the walls. Some of the nuns had been brutally raped, They'd come, throw their arms around our necks, and sob out their story of terror.

Then across the airfield came one of our missionary brethren. "Oh, Brother Champlin it's awful, it's awful. They just killed Irene Ferrell." My wife's sister-in-law's sister. Back in Zaire, still serving after doctors in the USA discovered she had a collapsed lung and couldn't reinflate it. Back in Zaire because her God had told her to stay there. They were with us just the day before she died. We sat around a table. They had just heard that their pastor had been murdered. Their black pastor. They said, "We've must go back. Our people are there." They got in their little Volkswagen, and went out into the maw of that awesome revolution, where villages and towns were burning. Women were being raped, men were being murdered, children were being trampled, and everything that was alive was in danger. They went through it until they arrived at their station. That night the rebels swept in screaming, "Beema! Beema! Beema!" They got the women, pushed them out on the steps and shot Irene through the neck with an arrow. Her blood spurted, soaking Ruth as a poisoned arrow hit Ruth in the shoulder and the two of them tumbled down the steps of the porch onto the ground. They poked and prodded Ruth to try to find out if she were alive, and finally decided she was dead. When they were gone she aroused from her stupor, and soaked in the blood of Irene who lay dead she crawled into a little hut where she found a bag of brown beans. She opened that big sack and dumped it on the ground, snuggled down in, covered herself with the beans, and stretched that gunnysack over her body trying to get warm from the awful shock that held her.

The next time the missionary came he said, "Brother Champlin, I don't know how to tell you this, but we've just gotten word that your wife's family, her brothers and their families, and your children, have all been massacred."

Our hearts broke. We heard the voice of our dear Lord Jesus saying "Do you love Me? How? Will you give your children for the souls of these Africans?"

Somehow he gave us grace to look into His face through the tears streaming down our eyes, and we cried out, "Yes, Lord Jesus, with shoes on."

For a week they were dead to us. Helicopters came. We asked them, "Would you please look?" The Canadian Major in command pulled a flashlight out of his back pocket. He said, "Do you see this flashlight? Look at the end." There was a bullet hole in the end. He opened the top, and there was the bullet jammed against the bulb. He said, "Yesterday that bullet came up through the floor of our helicopter. If I had not had this flashlight in my pocket that bullet would have gone through me. Missionary, I'm willing to die for the living, but not for your family. They're dead."

But after a couple of days they said, "Draw us a map, and we'll look." We drew a map. We watched them take off in three helicopters until they disappeared over the horizon. The nuns continued to come in and hang on our necks and sob. Later that morning we saw those three little black specks appearing again. At last they hung over our airfield and began to lower. We were almost afraid to look. At last they landed, and the doors swung open. Our loved ones started climbing out!

"Alright, you gave them to me. Abraham, you put your Isaac on the altar. Now you can have him back."

The question comes again, and again, and again, beloved. "Dad, do you love me? How? Mom, do you love Me? How? Young man, do you love Me? How do you love Me?"

We were evacuated then. Our field was gone, our people were scattered, our churches were burned. It was time to come to the U.S.A. and prepare for our return to Congo. Oh how we pled with the Lord for a year and a half to let us go back. The carpet was wet with our tears as we lay through the night on our faces. But it wasn't His purpose.

He opened the field of Surinam, South America to us. It had been abandoned as a waste of time, men, and money. We found out why when we arrived there in May of 1965. They'd been under the

absolute control of demon empowered witch doctors. I'm talking about real power. I'm talking about a witch doctor that could go out here on this street and call lightening and thunder down out of a clear blue sky that would shake this building to the very rafters, and the sulfur smell would singe your nostrils. I'm talking about witch doctors who will send little boys up thorn trees with thousands of steel strong, needle-sharp thorns in rings, just about four inches apart, sticking straight up. They would send the boy up over those and down through those picking fruit. Not a single wound. Not a drop of blood. Under that power this people had lived for two hundred without a soul being saved.

They persecuted us, as they had three couples, driving them all out in less than a year, the last couple lasting five months. You see, there were no roads between those villages. No trails, even. You had to reach them, and still today you must reach them by boat. You're talking about a climate where we have, in our living room when we sit down to lunch, an average temperature of 94 degrees. Humidity sits at about 70, or 75%. That's inside the house. In the shade it's 110. In the open sun . . . I don't know because we haven't found a thermometer that will stay in the sun without breaking. They made us sit in our boats and wait till they jolly well pleased to let us come ashore in any one of the villages. They burned us and parboiled us and roasted us until my nose and my mouth were covered with great blisters again and again. The scars are still there. Sadistic people, you say.

No. It was my blessed Lord Jesus asking one of His servants, "Do you love Me? How do you love Me?"

Then miraculously souls began to be saved. A witch doctor was saved. The whole fabric of their demon possessed government was being shaken by a power that they could not imagine. A power they had never experienced. In panic they ratched up their persecution until at last, all else failing, they brought out their trump card. They brought Apotu, the fire dancing witch doctor. They invited me to come and watch.

Louise stayed home to pray. I walked over the jungle trail to the village. There a great crowd of people, 400 or more up in the trees or on the ground crowded around a blazing fire over here and a heap of broken beer bottle glass there. I looked around. There behind them I could see the witch doctor clad only in a loin cloth, bare headed and footed, communing with his demon spirits and washing with his herb water. Then he came out to the beat of drums modeled after those brought from Africa many years ago. He began to dance around and around that broken beer bottle glass. He leaped on it, danced on it, rolled in it, and he wasn't cut. The people began to shout "The demon is on him! The demon is on him!" They knew the source of the power. He left that heap of glass and went into the fire. There he stood in it, playing in it, picking up the blazing brands -- in a knee high fire -- running them over his face and through his hair. Back into the glass, back into the fire. Now he has the people in the palm of his hand, and he said, "Now if you will follow me. I'll give you this power."

It dawned on me why he'd come. He'd come to break the power of the gospel by demonstrating the power of Satan. My heart broke. "Oh God! Here are babes in Christ. Here are those who are counting the cost of losing their families if they trust Jesus as their Savior, of being ostracized from their nation if they follow the Lord Jesus. They're being tempted to follow the devil again. Oh God, what can I do to stop them?"

My Lord Jesus simply asked me, "Do you love Me?"

"Yes Lord."

"Then you just do the dance he has just done to show them that I have power."

"Yes, Lord."

They got a couple of candidates and took them off to the side. They heaped the glass again, built the fire blazing again. They didn't notice that I was able to slip through the crowd. Before they knew what I was about to do I pulled off my shoes and socks and jumped on that glass. I have to admit, beloved, that I jumped rather gingerly, but I found God was protecting me. I stomped in it, it could not cut me. You don't have to be charismatic to believe that. You just have to know that you serve Jehovah Sabaoth, General of the hosts of the universe.

People began to shout "The demon is on the missionary!" They didn't understand yet. I tell you I didn't feel the glass, but beloved, when I went into that fire, it was hot! I was a good Baptist boy, and I never learned to dance, but I did some kind of dance on that fire. Stomped in it, jumped up and down in it, and by God's grace a few minutes later it was out. I looked down and could see those red hot coals glowing there like little Christmas tree lights between my toes. You can imagine the effect on the people. I turned to them and said, "Now listen. God's not in the business of fire dances. You have the Bible, His Word. You have His messenger. You have the gospel. If you did not believe and receive the Lord Jesus He could have sent you to hell, and it would have been just. But God had mercy on you tonight to show you His power.

Now you can follow this man Apotu, and he'll give you this demonic power, but it will carry you to hell. If you follow my Lord Jesus He'll forgive your sins, and he'll take you to heaven. Make your choice."

They made it just like that. The drummers got up and left their drums. "Fire dance is over," they said. The crowd began to break up and go back into the village. The witch doctor and leadership of the village were furious! I've been stoned a couple times, but I thought that night, "They are going to kill me!" Swarming around, clenching their fists, gnashing their teeth. A couple of our young Christians, just saved, came to help protect me and we had a hot time for about 30 minutes. Finally they let me go. I went over that little trail that they'd just allowed us to cut through the jungle. Back over that swampy place to our house. My feet were hot. I got down and looked at them, but couldn't see anything wrong. I prayed, "Oh God, if I wake in the morning burned and blistered You have suffered an awful defeat. Lord, you must help me. Your people, Lord. Your glory, Lord. Your mission, Lord." I went to bed. About six-o'clock in the morning I woke up and looked at my feet. They were perfect. Praise the Lord!

No sooner was I out of bed than there came a knock at the door. But they don't knock like that. They call out "Kokoko?" I went to the door. It's people from the village.

"Missionary, how are your feet?"

"Well, you just take a look." I said. "They're just fine."

A couple of our young men, just starting in training to serve, came to me and said, "Missionary, if that's the kind of God we serve you show us the way and we'll walk in it." Today, beloved, they preach in 40 towns and villages across an area half the size of the state of Michigan. They're walking.

Again, and again, and again, our matchless Lord comes to us and says "Dad, do you love me? How? Mom, Grandma, Grandpa, son, daughter, do you love Me? How do you love Me?"

I knew someone once who was in love with his Lord Jesus. We got a letter from him when he was 83 years old. He said "You know, the other day I was riding my bicycle up a hill in the jungle and I fell down. I didn't used to fall down. Do you think maybe I'm getting old?" No. He put on his boots in 1917, and he went to his grave with his boots on. Daddy Grings, at the age of 85, in Zaire, Africa.

That, beloved, is a passion that cannot be quenched. That, beloved, is an obsession that cannot be denied. That, beloved, is a vision that cannot be dimmed. That, beloved, is a destination, the enthronement of his Lord, that will not be abandoned. That, beloved, is a man looking into the face of his God and crying, "Yes, Lord Jesus, I love You, with shoes on."

Do you realize, beloved, in John verse 17, that Jesus changed the question? He saith unto him the third time, "Simon son of Jonas lovest thou me?" Here the Lord Jesus uses Peter's word. "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You with a warm hearted affection."

Young man, must He change the question? Dad, must He change the question? Mom, must He change the question? What a tragedy!

But there's hope. For Peter learned. Now you go back to 1 Peter 4:1, and you find these words: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." Peter learned.

Can you imagine Peter preaching from John chapter 21? Here he's standing before his congregation and saying "Beloved, I was there in John 21. My Lord Jesus had just risen from the grave, and He came to me. He said 'Peter, we're going to war. Will you get on your boots? Will you love Me? Will you love Me as I have loved you?' But all I could see was Him hanging on Calvary's cross. All I could see was that beautiful face mashed into a pulp. Oh it was true that the prophet said 'His visage was marred more than any man.' He didn't appear human. I saw His back all torn to ribbons. All I could see was the spikes through His wrists. All I could see was Him hanging naked there to the scorn of the world. All I could see was that gory, thorny crown upon his brow, the blood streaming down over Him and caking His body, and I couldn't love Him that way. All I could think was Man of sorrows, what a name for the Son of God Who came ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah, what a Savior. But I couldn't love Him that way. But I've learned. Beloved, I've been in jail. They've beaten me. They've scorned me and hated me just like He told me. And now, just as He told me, they're going to do with me that which I would not have done. Beloved, they're going to crucify me for my Lord Jesus. I'm going to die just as He said. Therefore, forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."

Peter learned. And that means, beloved, that perhaps I can learn. That means perhaps you can learn, son. And you, daughter. And you, Dad. And you, Mom. And you, Grandma. Perhaps you can learn to say "God, take my grandson and make him a soldier." Perhaps you, Mom, can pray over your children, even over your unborn child as did my mother. "Oh God, give me a son. Make a missionary of him, and I'll be the happiest mom in all the world." She prayed 22 months later over my unborn brother Russell. She

stood with the tears of joy streaming down her face as she watched me sail for Africa in '54 and my brother for Brazil in '57. Perhaps we can learn, beloved. Peter learned.

I was preaching as I do each year for Bob Gray down at Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville. He told me of an 83 year old man who'd come to know the Lord as his Savior, about to be baptized. He said, "Pastor, could I just say one thing in the baptistry?" He stood before two or three thousand people, in the waters of the baptistry, and he said, "Beloved, I'm 83, and I almost missed it."

There are some dads here tonight who have almost missed showing your son, your daughter, what it is to have a father who is a soldier for Jesus Christ. You almost missed it! You failed to look at Jehovah Sabaoth, General of the hosts of the universe. Failed to watch Him put on His boots. Failed to watch Him strap on His buckler. Failed to watch Him take up His sword go to war against sin, and against Satan across this world, and across this universe. You've almost missed it, Dad. You miss it, and the possibility of your son finding it is almost gone.

Almost missed it, Mom. Showing your daughter, your children, what it means to have a mother who will separate from the desires of this world. Who will sacrifice and subject herself to the will of God and serve. And soldier.

Almost missed it, young man. You're making plans for your life. You haven't asked Jehovah Sabaoth, Lord, General of the hosts of the universe, for a place in the battle. Almost missed it.

But there's hope. Peter learned. That means I might. And you.

ⁱ Romans 8:29

ⁱⁱ Agapeo: Strongs 25 to love

ⁱⁱⁱ Phileo: Strongs 5368 To be a friend to, have affection for (denoting personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; while 25 is wider, embracing esp. the judgement and the *deliberate* assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty, and propriety.)

^{iv} John 21:15-19

^v Psalm 24:7-8

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