



WILLIAM CAREY 1761-1834

As a young man in England in the late 1780s, William Carey was obsessed with the conviction that the church must take God's Word to every nation. At this time, Protestants were not active in missionary activity. Carey kept urging his fellow pastors to set up a missionary agency, but they always seemed to have more urgent problems closer to home. At one meeting an elder pastor reportedly snapped at him: "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do without consulting you or me." Carey was determined, yet he faced several obstacles:

- Lack of formal training – Carey did not go to school beyond the age of 12 when he became a cobbler's apprentice. He was educationally unqualified, yet he knew God had given him a great gift for languages, and this must be shared with other cultures.
- Rejection – when Carey was preparing for ordination in 1785, he was rejected when he gave his first sermon as a candidate. It took him two more years for him to be eventually ordained to the ministry.
- Indifference of colleagues – Carey's missionary concern was ignored until he produced in 1792 one of the most important books in all of church history, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*. In it he argued that Christ's "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:19-20 was not just to the apostles but to Christians of all periods. He maintained that if Christians want to claim the comforts and promises of the New Testament, they must also accept the commands and instructions given there. He admonished Christians that to "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."
- Family Tragedy – he had lost three of his six small children.

His colleagues formed a missionary society and sent Carey as their first missionary to India, along with a Dr. John Thomas. Carey's wife, Dorothy, progressively lost her sanity and could not cope with the strain of living at a subsistence level in India. There was a problem of persecution of anyone who became a Christian because it meant breaking the caste system of India. But Carey labored on. It would be seven years in India before seeing his first convert. Furthermore, Carey opposed several practices in India including sacrificing children to the gods and widows being burned alive on their husband's funeral pyres. He faced what seemed endless hurdles and challenges.

Was it worth it? Absolutely! Carey formed a team of colleagues (the Serampore Trio) whose accomplishments elevated them to first magnitude in the history of all missions. Carey's team translated the Bible into 34 Asian languages, compiled dictionaries in several languages, started a college, began churches, established 19 mission stations, formed 100 rural schools encouraging the education of girls, and served as a professor at Fort William College in Calcutta. His life inspired tens of thousands to give themselves for the spread of the Gospel.