

E C H I N O I S

Adoniram Judson

How Few There Are Who Die So Hard!

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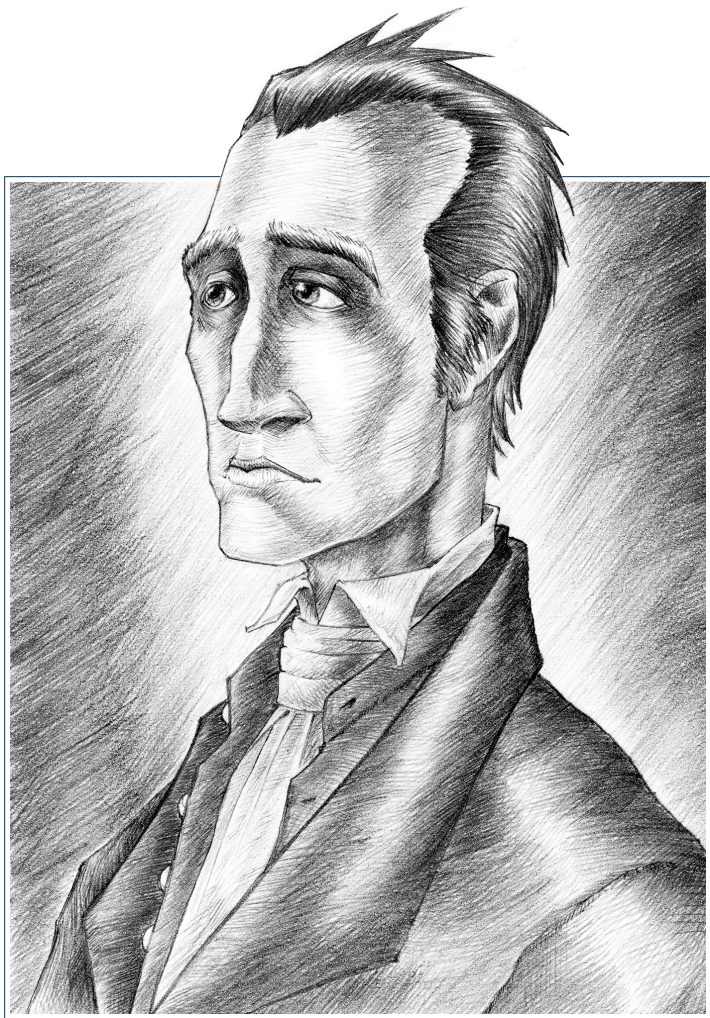
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For more biographies from John Piper, see Crossway's series, *The Swans Are Not Silent*.



Our Lord Jesus said to us in very solemn words, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). Then he adds this: “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25). In other words, a fruitful life and an eternal life come from this: dying like a seed and hating your life in this world. What overwhelms me, as I ponder this and trace the life of Adoniram Judson, America’s first foreign missionary, is how strategic it was that he “died” so many times and in so many ways.

More and more I am persuaded from Scripture and from the history of missions that God’s design for the evangelization of the world and the consummation of his purposes includes the suffering of his ministers and missionaries. To put it more plainly and specifically, God designs that the suffering of his ministers and missionaries is one essential means in the joyful, triumphant spread of the gospel among all the peoples of the world.

In what follows, I would like to give four points and a plea that all of you earnestly consider your role in completing the Lord’s Great Commission.

1. God purposes for the gospel to spread to all peoples.
2. God plans to make suffering a crucial means to accomplish this purpose.
4. We are in a historical position that cries out for tremendous missionary effort and sacrifice.

5. The pain of Adoniram Judson illustrates the purpose of suffering.
6. I plead for you to be a part of what Judson and Christ died for.

1. God purposes for the gospel to spread to all peoples.

This was the promise of the Old Testament:

*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn
to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations shall worship
before you.
For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations (Psalm 22:27–28).*

It was the promise of Jesus to his disciples:

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the
whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will
come (Matthew 24:14).*

It was the design of God in the cross:

*They sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you
ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and peo-
ple and nation” (Revelation 5:9).*

It was the final command of the risen, all-authoritative Christ:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go
therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the
name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teach-*

ing them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18–20).

It was the divine aim of Paul's apostleship:

Through [Christ] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations (Romans 1:5).

It was his holy ambition, rooted not just in a unique apostolic call but in the Old Testament promise that is still valid today:

I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand (Romans 15:20–21; see Isaiah 52:15).

So the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47; see Isaiah 42:6).

It was the divine purpose of the sending and filling of the Holy Spirit:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The invincible purpose of God is that "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4) spread to all the peoples of the world and take root in God-centered, Christ-exalting churches. This great global vision of the Christian movement becomes clear and powerful and compelling in pastors' lives

whenever there is biblical awakening in Christ's people—as there was among many in the first decades of the 1800s when Adoniram Judson was converted and called into missions along with hundreds of others as the light and power of truth awakened the churches.

2. God plans to make suffering a crucial means to accomplish his purpose.

I don't just mean that suffering is the consequence of obedient missions. I mean that suffering is one of Christ's strategies for the success of his mission.

Jesus said to his disciples as he sent them out:

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16).

There is no doubt what usually happens to a sheep in the midst of wolves. And Paul confirmed the reality in Romans 8:36:

As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Jesus knew this would be the portion of his darkness-penetrating, mission-advancing, church-planting missionaries. "Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword" (Romans 8:35). That is what Paul expected, because that is what Jesus promised. Jesus continues:

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them (eis marturion autoi) and the Gentiles (Matthew 10:17).

Notice that the witness before governors and kings is not a mere result or consequence, but a design. “You will be dragged before... kings to bear witness.” Why this design for missions? Jesus answers:

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. . . If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household? (Matthew 10:24–25)

Suffering was not just a consequence of the Master’s obedience and mission. It was the central strategy of his mission. It was the ground of his accomplishment. Jesus calls us to join him on the Calvary road, to take up our cross, and to hate our lives in this world, and fall into the ground like a seed and die, that others might live. We are not above our Master. To be sure, our suffering does not atone for anyone’s sins, but it is a deeper way of doing missions than we often realize.

When the martyrs cried out to Christ from under the altar in heaven, “How long till you judge and avenge our blood?” they were told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been (Revelation 6:11).

Martyrdom is not the mere consequence of radical love and obedience; it is the keeping of an appointment set in heaven for a certain number: “Wait till the number of martyrs is complete who are to be killed.” Just as Christ died to save the unreached peoples of the world, so some missionaries are to die to save the people of the world.

And lest we think this way of saying it aligns the suffering work of missionaries too closely with the suffering-work of

Jesus, listen to the decisive word on this from Paul in Colossians 1:24:

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

In his sufferings Paul is “filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for... the church.” Not that Paul’s sufferings atone for sin or propitiate wrath or vindicate divine justice in passing over sins, but they show the unreached peoples of the world the sufferings of Christ. When Paul shares Christ’s sufferings with joy and love, he delivers, as it were, those very sufferings to the ones for whom Christ died. Paul’s missionary suffering is God’s design to complete the sufferings of Christ, by making them more visible and personal and precious to those for whom he died.

So I say this very sobering word: God’s plan is that his gospel-spreading, church-planting purpose triumph through the suffering of his people, especially his ministers and missionaries. And not many illustrate this better than Adoniram Judson.

3. We are in a historical position that cries out for tremendous missionary effort and sacrifice.

Patrick Johnstone says in *Operation World* that only in the 1990s did we get a reasonably complete listing of the world’s peoples. For the first time we can see clearly what is left to be done. There are about 12,000 ethnolinguistic peoples in the world. About 3,500 of these have, on average, 1.2% Christian populations—about 20 million of the 1.7 billion people, us-

ing the broadest, nominal definition of Christian.¹ Most of these least reached 3,500 peoples are in the 10/40 window and are religiously unsympathetic to Christian missions. That means that that we must go to these peoples with the gospel, and it will be dangerous and costly. Some of us and some of our children will be killed.

When Adoniram Judson entered Burma in July, 1813 it was a hostile and utterly unreached place. William Carey had told Judson in India a few months earlier not to go there. It probably would have been considered a closed country today—with anarchic despotism, fierce war with Siam, enemy raids, constant rebellion, no religious toleration. All the previous missionaries had died or left.²

But Judson went there with his 23-year-old wife of 17 months. He was 24 years old and he worked there for 38 years until his death at age 61, with one trip home to New England after 33 years. The price he paid was immense. He was a seed that fell into the ground and died. And the fruit God gave is celebrated even in scholarly works like David Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia*: "The largest Christian force in Burma is the Burma Baptist Convention, which owes its origin to the pioneering activity of the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson"³

Judson was a Baptist when he entered Burma in 1813, even though he left New England as a Congregationalist. His mind had changed during the 114-day voyage to India and Carey's colleague, William Ward, baptized Adoniram and Ann Judson in India on September 6, 1812. Today Patrick Johnstone estimates the Myanmar (Burma's present-day name) Baptist

Convention to be 3,700 congregations with 617,781 members and 1,900,000 affiliates⁴—the fruit of this dead seed.

Of course there were others besides Adoniram Judson—hundreds of others over time. But they too came and gave away their lives. Most of them died much younger than Judson. They only serve to make the point. The astonishing fruit in Myanmar today has grown in the soil of the suffering and death of many missionaries, especially Adoniram Judson.

My question is, if Christ delays his return another two hundred years—a mere fraction of a day in his reckoning—which of you will have suffered and died so that the triumphs of grace will be told about one or two of those 3,500 peoples who are in the same condition today that the Karen and Chin and Kachins and Burmese were in 1813? Who will labor so long and so hard, persevering so that in two hundred years there will be two million Christians among the 10/40-window peoples who can scarcely recall their Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist roots?

May God use his powerful word and the life of Adoniram Judson to stir many of you to give your lives to this great cause!

4. The pain of Adoniram Judson illustrates the purpose of suffering.

Adoniram Judson “hated his life in this world” and was a “seed that fell into the ground and died.” In his sufferings “he filled up what was lacking in Christ’s afflictions” in unreached Burma. Therefore his life bore much fruit and he lives to enjoy it today and forever. He would, no doubt, say: It was worth it.

A Confidence In God's Sovereignty And Goodness

Judson was a Calvinist, but did not wear his Calvinism on his sleeve.⁵ You can see the evidence for his Reformed convictions in Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory*.⁶ Judson's father, who was a Congregationalist pastor in Massachusetts, had studied with Jonathan Edwards's student Joseph Bellamy, and Adoniram inherited a deep belief in the sovereignty of God. The great importance here is to stress that this deep confidence in God's overarching providence through all calamity and misery sustained him to the end. He said, "If I had not felt certain that every additional trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings."⁷

This was the unshakable confidence of all three of his wives, Ann (or Nancy), Sarah, and Emily. For example, Ann, who married Judson on February 5, 1812 and left with him on the boat on February 19 at age 23, bore three children to Adoniram. All of them died. The first baby, nameless, was born dead just as they sailed from India to Burma. The second child, Roger Williams Judson, lived 17 months and died. The third, Maria Elizabeth Butterworth Judson, lived to be two, and outlived her mother by six months and then died.

When her second child died, Ann Judson wrote:

*Our hearts were bound up with this child; we felt he was our earthly all, our only source of innocent recreation in this heathen land. But God saw it was necessary to remind us of our error, and to strip us of our only little all. O, may it not be vain that he has done it. May we so improve it that he will stay his hand and say 'It is enough.'*⁸

In other words, what sustained this man and his three wives was a rock-solid confidence that God is sovereign and God is good. And all things come from his hand for the good—the incredibly painful good—of his children.

There are roots of this missionary-sustaining confidence in God's goodness and providence. One, of course, is Judson's father. That's what he believed and that's what he lived. A second source of this confidence was the Bible. Judson was a lover of the Word of God. The main legacy of his 38 years in Burma was a complete translation of the Bible into Burmese and a dictionary that all the later missionaries could use.

Once when a Buddhist teacher said that he could not believe that Christ suffered the death of the cross because no king allows his son such indignity, Judson responded:

Therefore you are not a disciple of Christ. A true disciple inquires not whether a fact is agreeable to his own reason, but whether it is in the book. His pride has yielded to the divine testimony. Teacher, your pride is still unbroken. Break down your pride, and yield to the word of God.⁹

The Remarkable Salvation Of This Prodigal Son

Another source of his confidence in the goodness and detailed providence of God was the way God saved him. It is a remarkable story. He was a brilliant boy. His mother taught him to read in one week when he was three to surprise his father when he came home from a trip.¹⁰ When he was 16 he entered Brown University as a sophomore and graduated at the top of his class three years later in 1807.

What his godly parents didn't know was that Adoniram was being lured away from the faith by a fellow student name Jacob Eames who was a Deist. By the time Judson was finished he had no Christian faith. He kept this concealed from his parents until his 20th birthday, August 9, 1808, when he broke their hearts with his announcement that he had no faith and that he intended to go to New York and learn to write for the theater—which he did six days later on a horse his father gave him as part of his inheritance.

It didn't prove to be the life of his dreams. He attached himself to some strolling players, and, as he said later, lived “a reckless, vagabond life, finding lodgings where he could, and bilking the landlord where he found opportunity.”¹¹

That disgust with what he found there was the beginning of several remarkable providences. He went to visit his uncle Ephraim in Sheffield, but instead found there a “pious young man” who stunned him by being firm in his Christian convictions without being “austere and dictatorial.”¹² Strange that he should find this young man there, instead of his uncle.

The next night he stayed in a small village inn where he had never been before. The innkeeper apologized that his sleep might be interrupted because there was a man critically ill in the next room. Through the night he heard comings and goings and low voices and groans and gasps. It bothered him to think that the man next to him may not be prepared to die. He wondered about himself and had terrible thoughts of his own dying. He felt foolish because good deists weren't supposed to have these struggles.

When he was leaving in the morning he asked if the man next door was better. “He is dead,” said the innkeeper. Judson

was struck with the finality of it all. On his way out he asked, “Do you know who he was?” “Oh yes. Young man from the college in Providence. Name was Eames, Jacob Eames.”¹³

Judson could hardly move. He stayed there for hours pondering the death of his deist friend. If his friend Eames were right, then this was a meaningless event. But Judson could not believe it: “That hell should open in that country inn and snatch Jacob Eames, his dearest friend and guide, from the next bed—this could not, simply could not, be pure coincidence.”¹⁴

His conversion was not immediate. But now it was sure. God was on his trail, like the apostle Paul in the Damascus road, and there was no escape. There were months of struggle. He entered Andover Seminary in October, 1808 and on December 2 made a solemn dedication of himself to God.

An Awakening For Global Missions

The fire was burning for missions at Andover and at Williams College (the haystack prayer meeting had taken place in August of 1806, near Williams College, and two from there had come to Andover).

On June 28, 1810 Judson and others presented themselves to the Congregationalists for missionary service in the East. He met Ann that same day and fell in love. After knowing Ann Hasseltine for one month he declared his intention to become a suitor, and wrote to her father the following letter:

I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world;

whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean, to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left is heavenly home, and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteous, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Savior from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?²⁵

Her father, amazingly, said she could make up her own mind. She wrote to her friend Lydia Kimball:

I feel willing, and expect, if nothing in Providence prevents, to spend my days in this world in heathen lands. Yes, Lydia, I have about, come to the determination to give up all my comforts and enjoyments here, sacrifice my affection to relatives and friends, and go where God, in his Providence, shall see fit to place me.¹⁶

Their Sufferings On The Field

They were married a year and a half later on February 5, 1812,¹⁷ and sailed for India 12 days later with two other couples and two single men¹⁸ divided among two ships in case one went down. After a time in India they chose to risk Rangoon and arrived there July 13, 1813. There began a life-long battle in the 108-degree heat with cholera, malaria, dysentery, and un-

known miseries that would take two of Judson's wives and seven of his 13 children, and colleague after colleague in death.

The first news from home arrived two years later on September 5, 1815. They had died to the nearness of family. Adoniram would never see his mother or father or brother again. He does not return for 33 years. "Missionary time" in those days was very slow. It was a world of difference from today. If someone was sick enough the typical remedy to save life was a sea voyage. So a marriage or the entire work could be put on hold, so to speak, for three to six months.

Or it could be longer. Eight years into their mission Ann was so ill that the only hope was a trip home. She sailed on August 21, 1821. She returned on December 5, 1823, two years and four months later. And when she arrived he had not heard from her for 10 months. If you are married and you love your wife, this is the way you die day after day for a greater good and a greater joy.

One of the joys was seeing some of God's goodness in the dark providences. For example, when Ann was recovering in the States, she wrote a book, *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire*. It had a huge influence in stirring up recruits and prayer and finances. This would have never happened without her sickness and two-year absence. But most of the time the good purposes for pain were not that clear.

Through all the struggles with sickness and interruptions Judson labored to learn the language, translate the Bible, and do evangelism on the streets. Six years after they arrived, they baptized their first convert, Maung Nau. The sowing was long and hard. The reaping even harder for years. But in 1831

there was a new spirit in the land. Judson wrote:

The spirit of inquiry... is spreading everywhere, through the whole length and breadth of the land.” [We have distributed] nearly 10,000 tracts, giving to none but those who ask. I presume there have been 6,000 applications at the house. Some come two or three months’ journey, from the borders of Siam and China—’Sir, we hear that there is an eternal hell. We are afraid of it. Do give us a writing that will tell us how to escape it.’ Others, from the frontiers of Kathay, 100 miles north of Ava—’Sir, we have seen a writing that tells about an eternal God. Are you the man that gives away such writings? If so, pray give us one, for we want to know the truth before we die.’ Others, from the interior of the country, where the name of Jesus Christ is a little known—’Are you Jesus Christ’s man? Give us a writing that tells us about Jesus Christ.”¹⁹

But there had been an enormous price to pay between the first convert in 1819 and this outpouring of God’s power in 1831.

In 1823 Adoniram and Ann moved from Rangoon to Ava, the capital, about 300 miles inland and further up the Irrawaddy River. It was risky to be that near the despotic emperor. In May of the next year the British fleet arrived in Rangoon and bombarded the harbor. All westerners were immediately viewed as spies, and Adoniram was dragged from his home and on June 8, 1824 and put in prison. His feet were fettered and at night a long horizontal bamboo pole was lowered and passed between the fettered legs and hoisted up till only the shoulder and heads of the prisoners rested on the ground.

Ann was pregnant, but walked the two miles daily to the palace to plead that Judson was not a spy and that they should

have mercy. She got some relief for him so that he could come out into a court yard. But still the prisoners got vermin in their hair amid the rotting food, and had to be shaved bald. Almost a year later they were suddenly moved to a more distant village prison, gaunt, with hollow eyes, dressed in rags, crippled from the torture. There the mosquitoes from the rice paddies almost drove them mad on their bloody feet.

The daughter, Maria, had been born by now and Ann was almost as sick and thin as Adoniram, but still pursued him with her baby to take care of him as she could. Her milk dried up, and the jailer had mercy on them and actually let Judson take the baby each evening into the village and beg for women to nurse his baby.

On November 4, 1825 Judson was suddenly released. The government needed him as a translator in negotiations with Britain. The long ordeal was over—17 months in prison and on the brink of death, with his wife sacrificing herself and her baby to care for him as she could. Ann's health was broken. Eleven months later she died (October 24, 1826). And six months later their daughter died (April 24, 1827).

While he was suffering in prison Adoniram had said to a fellow prisoner:

It is possible my life will be spared; if so, with what ardor shall I pursue my work! If not—his will be done. The door will be opened for others who would do the work better.²⁰

Darkness Settled Over His Soul

Now that his wife and daughter were gone, darkness began

to settle over his soul. In July, three months after the death of his little girl, he got word that his father had died eight months earlier.

The psychological effects of these losses were devastating. Self-doubt overtook his mind, and he wondered if he had become a missionary for ambition and fame, not humility and self-denying love. He began to read the Catholic mystics, Madame Guyon, Fenelon, Thomas a Kempis, etc. who led him into solitary asceticism and various forms of self-mortification. He dropped his Old Testament translation work, the love of his life, and retreated more and more from people and from “anything that might conceivably support pride or promote his pleasure.”²¹

He refused to eat outside the mission. He destroyed all letters of commendation. He formally renounced the honorary Doctor of Divinity that Brown University had given him in 1823 by writing a letter to the American Baptist Magazine. He gave all his private wealth (about \$6,000) to the Baptist Board. He asked that his salary be reduced by one quarter and promised to give more to missions himself. In October, 1828 he built a hut in the jungle some distance from the Moulmein mission house and moved in on October 24, 1828, the second anniversary of Ann’s death, to live in total isolation.

He wrote in one letter home to Ann’s relatives: “My tears flow at the same time over the forsaken grave of my dear love and over the loathsome sepulcher of my own heart.”²² He had a grave dug beside the hut and sat beside it contemplating the stages of the body’s dissolution. He ordered all his letters in New England destroyed on condition of returning a legal

document his sister needed. He retreated for forty days alone further into the Tiger-infested jungle, and wrote in one letter than he felt utter spiritual desolation. “God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not.”²³

His brother, Elnathan, died May 8, 1829 at the age of 35. Ironically, this proved the turning point of Judson’s recovery, because he had reason to believe that the brother that he had left in unbelief 17 years earlier had died in faith. All through the year 1830 Adoniram was climbing out of his darkness.

And you recall that it was 1831—the next year—when he experienced the great outpouring of spiritual interest across the land. Is that a coincidence? Or was that a God-ordained pattern for spiritual breakthrough in a dark and unreached place?

If we had time we would tell of his remaining sufferings and joys. He married Sarah Boardman, a missionary widow, on April 10, 1834, eight years after Ann died. They had eight children. Five survived childhood. She was a gifted partner and knew the language better than any but himself.

But 11 years later she was so sick that they both set sail for America with the three oldest children. They left the three youngest behind, one of whom died before Judson returned. Judson had not been to America now for 33 years and was only returning for the sake of his wife. As they rounded the tip of Africa in September, 1845, Sarah died. The ship dropped anchor at St. Helena Island long enough to dig a grave and bury a wife and mother and then sail on.

Disengaged From Hoping In This World

This time Adoniram does not descend into the depths as be-

fore. He has his children. But even more, his sufferings have disengaged him from hoping for too much in this world. He was learning how to hate his life in this world without bitterness or depression. He had one passion: to return and give his life for Burma. So his stay in the states was long enough to get his children settled and find a ship back. All that was left of the life he knew in New England was his sister. She had kept his room exactly as it had been 33 years earlier and would do that same to the day she died.

To everyone's amazement, Judson fell in love a third time, this time with Emily Chubbuck and married her on June 2, 1846. She was 29; he was 57. She was a famous writer and left her fame and writing career to go with Judson to Burma. They arrived in November, 1846. And God gave them four of the happiest years that either of them had ever known.

On her first anniversary, June 2, 1847 she wrote:

It has been far the happiest year of my life; and, what is in my eyes still more important, my husband says it has been among the happiest of his. . . I never met with any man who could talk so well, day after day, on every subject, religious, literary, scientific, political, and—nice baby-talk.”²⁴

They had one child, but then the old sicknesses attacked Adoniram one last time. The only hope was to send the desperately ill Judson on a voyage. On April 3, 1850 they carried Adoniram onto the *Aristide Marie* bound for the Isle of France with one friend, Thomas Ranney, to care for him. In his misery he would be roused from time to time by terrible pain ending in vomiting. One of his last sentences was: “How few there

are who... who die so hard!"²⁵

At 15 minutes after 4:00pm on Friday afternoon April 12, 1850, Adoniram Judson died at sea, away from all his family and Burmese Church. That evening the ship hove to.

*The crew assembled quietly. The larboard port was opened. There were no prayers.... The captain gave the order. The coffin slid through the port into the night. The location was latitude 13 degrees North, longitude 93 degrees East, almost in the eastward shadow of the Andaman Islands, and only a few hundred miles west of the mountains of Burma. The Aristide Marie sailed on toward the Isle of France.*²⁶

Ten days later Emily gave birth to their second child who died at birth. She learned four months later that her husband was dead. She returned to New England that next January and died of tuberculosis three years later at the age of 37.

The Bible was done. The dictionary was done. Hundreds of converts were leading the church. And today there are close to about 3,700 congregations of Baptists in Myanmar who trace their origin to this man's labors of love.

5. I plead for you to be a part for what Judson and Christ died for.

Life is fleeting. In a very short time, we will all give an account before Jesus Christ, not only as to how well we have shepherded our flock, but how well we have obeyed the command to make disciples of all nations.

Many of the peoples of the world are without any indigenous Christian movement today. Christ is not enthroned

there, his grace is unknown there, and people are perishing with no access to the gospel. Most of these hopeless peoples do not want you to come. At least they think they don't. They are hostile to Christian missions. Today this is the final frontier. And the Lord still says,

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves... some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish (Matthew 10:16; Luke 21:16-18).

Are you sure that God wants you to continue your life in this comparatively church-saturated land? Or might he be calling you to fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, to fall like a grain of wheat into some distant ground and die, to hate your life in this world and so to keep it forever and bear much fruit?

Judson wrote to missionary candidates in 1832:

Remember, a large proportion of those who come out on a mission to the East die within five years after leaving their native land. Walk softly, therefore; death is narrowly watching your steps.²⁷

The question for us is not whether we will die, but whether we will die in a way that bears much fruit.

Notes

- 1 Patrick Johnstone, Jason Mandryk, eds., *Operation World* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2001), 15–16.
- 2 Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 134.
- 3 David Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 202.
- 4 Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 462.
- 5 Erroll Hulse, *Adoniram Judson and the Missionary Call* (Leeds: Reformation Today Trust, 1996), 48. “When we come to the doctrines of grace we find that he believed them implicitly rather than by explicit exposition.”
- 6 Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 148–154.
- 7 Quoted in *Giants of the Missionary Trail* (Chicago: Scripture Press Foundation, 1954), 73.
- 8 Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, 193.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 240.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 41.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 44. The source of this story is oral reports from family members recorded in Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of*

the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.
Vol. 1 (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co. 1854), 24–25.

- 14 Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, 45.
- 15 Ibid., 83
- 16 Ibid., 84.
- 17 In the meantime, Judson had sailed to England to raise support from the London Missionary Society. Because of the war between Britain and France he was captured on the high seas and imprisoned in France. But again the strange providence of God overruled and his American voice was heard crying out during one prisoners' march, and his release was purchased by a man from Philadelphia. He always saw that time as a crucial preparation for what he would suffer as a missionary.
- 18 Luther Rice, Gordon Hall, Samuel and Harriet Newell, Samuel and Roxana Nott.
- 19 Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, 398–399.
- 20 Ibid., 334.
- 21 Ibid., 387.
- 22 Ibid., 388.
- 23 Ibid., 391.
- 24 Ibid., 481.
- 25 Ibid., 504.

26 Ibid., 505.

27 Adoniram Judson, “Advice to Missionary Candidates,”
Maulmain, June 25, 1832, <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/bjudson4.html>

