

Missions: A Personal Responsibility

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Date: 31 July 2011

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[0:00] Today is our final day, our final lesson in John Piper's book, Let the Nations Be Glad, the Supremacy of God in Missions. Next week is going to start a new series from Paul Tripp's DVD series on marriage. It's called What Did You Expect?

And so if you are married, if you're planning on getting married, then this is a very pertinent series for you. Even if that's not on the horizon, there's principles here that will teach you how to relate to all kinds of people.

So that begins next week, but this week we're going to finish off this book on missions. Last week we saw that the primary task of missions is not to reach as many individuals as possible, but to reach all of the nations with the gospel.

Missions is the work of evangelizing the nations, different people groups, of making disciples of those nations. And like I said last week, we don't mean every political entity, because within greater political entities, there are smaller people groups.

And just because we reach all 200 countries that are part of the UN doesn't mean we've reached all the peoples of this world, because within those larger political entities, there are smaller people groups.

[1:29] And so the work of missions is to reach into all those nations, all those languages, tribes, clans, peoples, families of this world.

And I think a helpful distinction that we need to make, that we started to make last week, is that we need to make a distinction between evangelism and missions.

Evangelism is the work of reaching individuals. And even after the mission is completed in a place, the work of evangelism goes on.

So Paul went to Ephesus and he planted a church and then he could say later, I have no more work here. But at the same time, he wrote to Timothy and said, now do the work of an evangelist.

So his work of being a frontier missionary was over in Ephesus, but Timothy's work of being an evangelist was not over. And so we want to make that distinction.

[2:29] It creates so much confusion to call someone a home missionary. So Joe picks up his family in Chicago and moves them to Philadelphia. And if we call him a home missionary, I want to ask, is that really the best way to think about things?

I think it confuses what the Bible talks about when we talk about missions that way, because it blurs God's special, unique call on the church to go to the nations of this world, not just to individuals.

And so it makes going to Philadelphia the same as going to the Jom people in Yemen, where, when in reality, those are two very different things. Philadelphia has already been reached.

There are churches in Philadelphia. One is cross-cultural. One is to a completely unreached people group. One is going to plant churches where there are already other churches.

One is going to plant churches where there is no witness. And if we don't make that distinction in at least some way and keep that distinction, then we lose the biblical emphasis on the church's call to go to the different peoples of this world.

[3:42] We lose focus on what God has planned for the nations. And we talked about that at great length last week, about how God's salvation has always been intended to be a blessing to all the families of this world.

That's what we talked about last week. Are there any questions or comments that you would like to make? I'm ready to do my best to answer those or make those.

Yes, Ed? If someone would go to, say, like Miami and get Christ or the Reefs of the Cuban community there, would you say that the local churches in Miami should be reaching that?

Is there a distinction here? I guess I don't know the condition of the Cuban church in Miami. Okay. So within the same country, but it's a different ethnic group.

I would call that missions, provided that we'll say the Cuban group in Miami has not been reached. There's no effective gospel witness there. Then, yes, we could call that missions.

[4:49] The geopolitical place where those people are doesn't say whether they're reached or not reached. So, for example, there's the Navajo Nation out west.

Now, I don't know the condition of the Navajo Nation, but they are a distinct ethnic group within the United States. And there are certain cultural language barriers that some people have that right now will say Grace Fellowship is an English-speaking church.

We could not reach them because the cultural divide is there. And so maybe part of the missionary work would be to go to them and to immerse ourselves into their culture.

Does that help? A little bit? Yes, Jackie. It depends.

See, it goes back. I'm very uncomfortable with that one because it goes back to the distinction between what's the definition of reached and unreached.

[5:54] And I didn't really go into that. Like, for example, France. Is France reached? Is it a reached people? I don't think so.

Probably not. There are. But there are some churches in France with the evangelical gospel. So maybe they are, but we need to reach them more.

I'm kind of, I don't really know. I don't have those kind of answers. But I think we do need to make the distinction between people groups that we definitely know. They have the gospel. The work needs to be done in their country to evangelize those people.

And then we need to make that between that group and the group where they don't have any churches. They don't have a Bible in their language. They don't have any effective witness to them. Yeah? Why do we have to make the distinction? Because God does call certain people to the unreached and he calls other people to the reached.

[6:58] We have to call one of the decisions and why not. The way I'm defining missions, yes. Because we want to make that distinction between evangelism and missions.

Because missions has on its focus these people groups. And evangelism has on its focus individuals. Do you see what I'm saying? No?

No? No? Okay. So last week we talked about, we went through all those passages. Right? I started from Genesis 10 and I went to Genesis 12 and all through those passages.

The Bible has this continual focus on people's languages. So there's this focus on people groups, not just individuals. And all missions does is it says this is the call of the church where we focus on God's call to these peoples, groups, nations, tribes.

Where evangelism is God's call for all of us to make disciples wherever we're at. Do you see? It makes a distinction of it's an emphasis.

[8:10] That's all. I don't think that's a yes or no. I think it's just where you put your emphasis. Does that help? No? Because here's what happens effectively in the church practically.

It's easier to go to Philadelphia than it is to go to Yemen. And so if it's the same thing, people are generally not going to get out of their comfort zone unless there's a specific reason they see that they need to.

And so we, or not we, I don't know. There's a tendency just in, for us to think, well, if I, if I'm thinking about my neighbor, I don't have to think about the person who is unreached across the world.

And so what happens is missions doesn't go to those unreached peoples. It just sort of stays where it's at. Ed.

To build on that though, isn't it God the one who's following an individual to a people group?

[9:20] So I mean, if that person says, well, I want to go to Philadelphia or I want to go to Yemen, God is going to lay on that person's heart. Right. But he doesn't do it without means.

And generally the means of calling people to certain fields is information is brought, the gospel is preached, it's shown that these people need to hear. I mean, that's exactly what happened with William Carey and the call that he wrote.

And he started the missionary endeavor. Before he went to India, he wrote a book saying these are the peoples of the world, these are the status of whether they're reached or not, it wasn't like God called people to India just out of the blue.

He called it because people were describing the need, putting the emphasis on, we need to go to the unreached peoples, we need to go to India. And so, yes, it is God, but he uses means.

And part of that means is us as church leaders or us as the church putting the needs there. And whether God calls you to that particular thing or not, that's obviously in God's hands.

[10:31] But we want to make that distinction and say, well, we want to put these people groups in front of you. And if God calls you, he calls you. If he doesn't, he doesn't.

Any other questions? We could talk about it later. I do have to get moving or I'll never get anywhere in my lesson. So, I want to talk about two things today.

The first is, why? Why did God set up missions to reach all the peoples of the world? Why isn't it just this people or that people that God has set up missions to reach?

And the second is, what can we do? What can I do in order to participate in God's missionary effort to reach all the nations of the world?

So, first, why? Why did God set up missions so the goal is to reach all the peoples? Why is salvation for all the nations?

[11:33] And I think we have to go back to the very beginning of this book. And we have to ground our argument. Why do we have to reach all the peoples? In the fact, why does missions exist?

And so, at the very beginning of this series, we said that missions exist because what? Do you remember? Missions exist because worship doesn't.

Worship doesn't. So, let me read you the first paragraph of this book again. Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't.

Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over and the countless millions of the redeemed fall in their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more.

It is a temporary necessity, but worship is forever. So, the reason that when we focus on the unreached peoples of this world, when we do missions that way, it's connected to worship.

[12:34] We do it for reasons of worship. The reason that God's mission reaches to all the peoples of this world is because God will be most glorified when all peoples, people from all those different tribes, are trusting in the Lord Jesus and are glad in Him.

They're worshipping Him. And this isn't just some theological projection. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1.

And verse 5. We're breaking into a long sentence here. It says, So let me ask you, as you're looking at that, why did Paul and the rest of the apostles receive grace and apostleship?

What was the purpose? What do you see? Someone's bumbling.

To call people. To call people from among all the nations. Paul received grace for a specific reason, and the apostles as well, to call people from all the Gentiles, all the nations.

[14:23] Now, let me ask you, we've got to dig deeper. Why did Paul receive that grace and apostleship? It's at the very beginning of verse 5. Why did he receive that grace?

What does it say? For, yeah, for Jesus' sake. So, God gives grace and apostleship to Paul so that he can call people from all the nations.

And the reason he did that is for Jesus' sake. It's so that those nations would obey, come to faith, obey Jesus, worship Him. And so, the missions exist.

The reason we have RBMS, or any mission program, is for the glory of Jesus Christ. So, the nations would come and rest in Him, rest in His righteousness, stop trying to establish their own righteousness, their own goodness, and rest in what Jesus has done.

Let's keep looking in Romans. Turn over to Romans 15, verse 8. We've gone over this passage before in this series.

[15:32] We see it again today. Romans 15, 8. So, what was the goal of Jesus' ministry?

Why did He become a servant to the Jews? To confirm the truth for the Gentiles, so that the Gentiles would what? It's not hard.

Glorify God for His mercy, so that they would glorify God for His mercy. And that's exactly what we see happening in Revelation. So, turn over to Revelation chapter 5.

Chapter 5, verse 9. And then, they sang a new song.

5, 9. You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[16:53] You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they reign on the earth. So, people from all nations, every tribe and language and people and nation, are gathered into God's kingdom in order that they could be priests, in order that they could serve God, that they could worship God.

And so, that's what we see in Revelation. We see this great international host of people, and they're all praising God for His mercy. They're all praising Jesus for what He has done.

And so, the goal, we've gone over this, but the goal of missions is to glorify God. But why does it have to reach all the peoples in order to glorify God?

Why all the nations? Why not just some of the nations? Why do we have to think about all the nations when we think about missions? And the answer is that God is more glorified in diversity than in uniformity.

God is more glorified in diversity than in uniformity. God is more glorified when people from different languages and tribes and peoples and tongues and all those things, when they worship Him.

[18:06] And we have to understand that diversity is not a temporary reality. Diversity is an eternal reality. It's going to last forever.

And I think we have the wrong idea if we think that in heaven, we're all going to be the same. And we're all going to be worshiping God exactly the same way. Because diversity even exists in heaven.

We talked about this last week. So, turn over to Revelation chapter 21. We've looked at this passage last week. I want to look at it again. I remind you.

Revelation 21, 24. This is speaking of the New Jerusalem. And that's the people of God. It's the place where God dwells with His people. It's both a people and a place. And it says this in verse 24. The nations will walk by its light. So this is after the New Jerusalem has come. The nations are still there. And they walk by its light. And the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

[19:07] And then you go down a few lines. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. So ethnic diversity is not a temporary reality.

It doesn't go away when we come into heaven. It's still going to be there. Now, the next passage really blew my mind when I thought about it.

Turn 21, verse 3. Revelation 21, verse 3. It should be right there.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, So this is God. God is speaking. He says, Now the dwelling of God is with men.

And He will live with them. And they will be His people. And God Himself will be with them. And He will be their God. Now maybe you recognize what this is.

[20:05] This is the basic covenant promise that God repeats over and over again throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. I will be your God and you will be my people.

It's the basic promise of commitment. Now the reason this passage really blew my mind was one word. And it's that word people.

Now people, as we have it in our English translation and in almost every English translation, it's a singular. But the standard Greek text and all of the best Greek manuscripts, it is plural.

It is not singular. So, in all the best manuscripts, for some reason the English doesn't like to translate it the way it is. But God has changed the wording of His covenant promise here in Revelation.

And it says, And I'll be your God and you will be my peoples. And so, now God's covenant promise to be the God of a people has now, I'll be the God of the peoples.

[21:19] You'll be my peoples. And I think that's absolutely glorious. When God brings all of His people, there's still peoples.

There's still diversity. When God brings together all the nations, all the peoples, there's, all their unity is in Him. They're unified because of who they are in Him, because of what God has done for them.

But, yet, their diversity will not disappear. So, why does God want diversity? I have very, I have four really quick reasons.

We're going to have to speed through these. why does God want diversity in heaven? Why does God want diversity in worship? Four quick reasons. First, praise from unity and diversity is greater than praise from unity with uniformity.

That's really complicated. And basically, it's to say this. It's more beautiful when you have a harmony than you have a, than when you have a unison.

[22 : 23] So, when you have a four part choir, it produces a more complex, more rich, more beautiful music than just a group of baritones, we'll say, singing in unison.

And, the unity or the diversity of the nations praising God in heaven is, is like a thousand, it's a hundred thousand part harmony. And, we'll all be singing God's praises, but we'll be singing them differently, but God will have woven them all together in such a way that it's more beautiful, it's more glorifying to Him.

So, one, praise with diversity is more beautiful than praise with just uniformity. Second, the fame and greatness of an object of beauty is in proportion to the diversity of those who recognize as beauty.

Now, that's really hard. So, you have an object of beauty. The more different kinds of people that say, that is beautiful, shows how glorious it is.

And so, here we have God and all the nations are before Him and they're all different and they're all saying, He is beautiful. He is beautiful. And that is more glorious than if we just have one nation saying, He is beautiful.

[23 : 46] So, you have the Mona Lisa and we'll say, if you go to the Louvre in France and if you're Japanese, you think the Mona Lisa is beautiful. And if you're an American, you say the Mona Lisa is beautiful.

And if you're some South African, you say the Mona Lisa is beautiful. If you're from Papua New Guinea, you come and see and it's beautiful. And so, the more different kinds of people, the more people, the kinds of people that you have saying, God is beautiful, it is more glorious for God. And that's why God wants diversity in heaven. His glory is enhanced when people from Japan are praising God and when people from South Africa are praising God and when people from the United States are praising God and people from Papua New Guinea are praising God.

When they're all pointing together and saying, that is beautiful, it shows that he's not just a God of one nation that just a small group of people thinks is lovely.

All peoples everywhere will think God is lovely. Third, the strength and wisdom of a leader is magnified in proportion to the diversity of people who will follow him.

[25 : 02] So what makes a glorious leader? What makes a glorious president? It's when rich and poor say he's a good president. And when the intelligent and just the normal playing people they say he is a good leader.

And when men and women say he is a good leader. He's my leader and I follow him with joy. And so what is God doing? He's creating all these people or he's saving all these different kinds of people so that all together rich and poor men and women people from all different cultures and different ethnic backgrounds will come together and say he is my leader and I follow him with joy. So this diversity of people who are faithful to Jesus honors him. It's glorifying to him. And so God is after his glory and so he sends us to all these different places.

We go because we want to see him praised. Now number four. By focusing on all people groups God undercuts pride and he puts people it puts people completely on his grace.

So racism ethnocentric pride is just one more style that human pride comes in. And so we're different and that makes us better.

[26 : 34] I look different than you so I'm better than you. I'm from this culture so I'm better than you. But when God says in the gospel I will make you all my peoples well when that happens when God saves all these people and he makes them his we have to say it's by grace.

grace. It's not because I'm white. It's not because I'm American. It's not because I'm from this culture and I have this background. It's because of grace.

It's all because of grace. And so every time God says go to all the nations he's taking an axe and he's chopping down that pride in our heart that says well we're here and we're better than you because of who we are.

so why does God say go to the nations because it's it's for his own glory. His glory is better served when all peoples are worshiping him not just one or two groups not just one or two kinds of people. And so Jesus says go and make disciples of all the nations. now if that comes to rest on your heart when you see God is most glorified when all these nations are worshiping him and when there's this thousand part harmony of praise to Jesus for what he's done that should stir up in your heart a

desire to do something to reach all the unreached peoples to reach all the nations of the world because this is for God's glory this is for the glory of him who saved me and who loved me and who gave himself up for me and if that if that gospel is stirred in my heart then I should be thinking what can I do and that's our second question and we have to address it most briefly here what can I do to take part in God's great mission to the nations five things and hopefully they'll be practical and brief the first what can

[28:45] I do to take part in God's great mission number one is get excited about the gospel become excited about the gospel nothing else I say will make any difference whatsoever if the gospel is old hat to you if you don't see the relevance for it in your life if you're!

moved at all by it so if when the preaching of God's word comes and it's the gospel message and you're like okay that's nice then whatever I say won't make a difference the gospel motivates missions it motivates people to go so I don't need to explain what it is but I want you to stop right here right now and ask yourself honestly am I excited about the gospel is the good news actually good news to me or is it just old news plain news that I've heard we need to pray that God would stir up our hearts maybe you need to get a book and remind yourself of the goodness of the gospel maybe you need to sit down in the gospels and pray and ask Jesus to help you see the glory of the gospel again I just started reading a parenting book called give them grace dazzling your children with the love of

Jesus and this book was just so good for me just brought me back to the gospel and yeah it's going to help my parenting but it's helped me it's refreshed that gospel the sense of the gospel in me and so we need to be doing that or we're just going to sit here we're going to do the minimum we're not going to be excited because it's the gospel that motivates so we need to pray for revival and a fresh drink of the gospel so number two what can you do to take part in the gospel God's mission to the nations inform yourself of what's going on in the world what's the state of God's kingdom in the world you need to know and I brought two resources that will help you if you get them and check them out the first one is called Operation World it gives the situation in every nation it gives extensive information about what what's the how reached are these people you're going to have to read you know you can't take everything at face value you're going to have to read and think about things but

Operation World is a wonderful resource to show you what is God doing in the nations where are the nations at what are the particular struggle how can we pray for them then another resource would be excellent for family your children will love this book it has stories it has beautiful pictures it goes through lots of different nations and people groups and it explains what it's like to be there it explains what their religion is it explains what is it like to be a child in Iran Iran if you're a girl you can't play with a baby doll and you know what that came home to my daughter's!

And that's the badness of Satan and that teaches us and it teaches them and so inform yourself sit down and read those things number three involve your children involve your children do you want to give your children a great gift then give them a picture of a God who is bigger than our country and our place who is reaching to the ends of the world and saving who is working with not just middle class white Americans that's what mostly we are but who saves who works with people everywhere and so involve them take this book window on the world read a page or two a day have them pray with you for the nations do you want to see your children pray for things that really count well then go over and teach them to pray pray for them and you'll have all kinds of opportunities to share the gospel with your own children if you sit down and you show them what these people have how

[33:14] God has blessed them what do these people need what do you need I brought another resource this one's for even younger children it's called from Akibu to Zabotak and it's written for children who are first learning their alphabet so it has 26 different people groups from A to Z and it would be good for younger children but it would also be good for children 9 and 10 it takes each letter of the alphabet it gives a story and a picture about the different people group and this resource is put out by Wycliffe Bible translators and so all these people groups are without a Bible they don't have the Bible and so they tell a little story and it says and the Akibu people do not have a Bible and by the time you get to number 26 you're really appreciating the fact that you have a Bible so read a page pray over it and do you want to this is absolutely fabulous this is not the first from

Akibu to Zabotech is not the first book that Wycliffe has put out like this they used to have one called Arapesh to Zuni but something happened most of those 26 nations people groups that they

talked about as little children and people started praying for them they received a part of the Bible they received a whole Bible and so they had to do a whole other book because when children pray and when moms and dads pray God answers number four support frontier missions support frontier missions right now Octave Bourgeois is in Turkey right now William Joyner the son of Patrick Joyner is going to Mongolia!

So we want to pray for these brothers however we define reached or unreached the peoples they are going to are definitely unreached so we want to pray for them we want to support them financially number five think about going think about going or maybe I should say go we all need to ask ourselves and I'm not speaking I'm saying all as every single person here if you are saved we need to think about should I go or should I stay now for most of us the answer will be and should be I should stay this is where God has called me this is where he's gifted me but we all need to ask can I do more good here for God's plan for the nations can I do more good here or can I do more good abroad and don't just say oh yeah

I can do more good here seriously! think about it ask yourself man something like that you know I can't be a missionary okay that's true you might not be a man you might not be called definitely not called to be a missionary the main guy but you know Luke Luke wasn't a preacher he was a doctor and he went with Paul do you think he quit being a doctor for Paul when he went no he took where he was he took his calling and he took it on the road for the gospel sake he was a physician for missions and so we need to stop thinking so much that well we'll send out that one! guy and! he will do all the work the Bible has a much more team oriented picture when Paul went he generally didn't go alone he always went with someone and then a lot of times he brought along others so not only was it Paul and Silas there was Luke there and there was all these other people there was Timothy and they all went and so maybe you're not called to be!

[37 : 41] the front line missionary guy preaching to people but there's room for other supporters there's room for other people to go and just to be in a church to be a good churchman and that's something that you should think about you only have one life to live you only have one life to live you want to use it wisely then maybe you're saying I'm not qualified I want to go but I'm not there yet I would think about it let me just say nobody no pastor starts out being a pastor there's not these people that are born and they're pastors there's not these 13 year olds that say I'm a pastor and there he is instantly qualified and there's not missionaries that start out being just a missionary one day by God's grace they say this is where I want to go these are the steps I need to take and they start taking those steps and over time

God prepares them and so we want to be the kind of people that say okay do I need to start taking these steps I'm a young man do I need to start taking these steps to go to the nations I'm not qualified yet but by God's grace you can be so what can we do inform ourselves this world is much bigger God is doing much more than we really think and know two thirds of Christians in this world don't live in the west they live somewhere else they live in Africa they live in Asia if we think when we think Christianity we think white Americans we're not thinking properly God is doing wonderful things across this world so inform yourself involve your children give your children a big God that's doing things across this world three support frontier missions four I left out one I think so think about going so brothers and sisters let's do more for

Jesus who did so much for us he gave himself up for us and we're called to carry our cross and that might be going to the ends of the earth so think about it we're dismissed