

Mission Convictions

This Sunday, we begin our Mission month. Such an emphasis begs the questions, "What are the convictions that should compel us to commit to God's mission in this world? Why should we personally and passionately participate in God's sovereign purposes in this world?"

First, Missions is all about God. God is a missionary God. He chose a man from Ur of the Chaldees, Abram, and promised him, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3). The promise God gave to Abraham was culminated in His eternal Son, Jesus Christ. "In the fullness of time, God sent His Son..." (Gal. 4:4). "For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God is a sending, missionary God.

God's missionary passion, from His covenant with Abraham to the sending of His Son, is His glory. "I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations" (Is. 66:19). God rescued Israel from Egypt ... "for His name's sake, to make his mighty power known" (Ps. 106:7-8). In leading His people out of the wilderness, He says through the prophet Ezekiel, "For the sake of My name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out" (Ezekiel 20:14). He gave His people victory in Canaan because "Who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for Himself, and to make a name for Himself..." (2 Sam. 7:23). Jesus, in anticipation of His death, says, "Now, My heart is troubled... Father save Me from this hour. No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (Jn.12:27-28).

The reason many Christians do not have a heart for ministry and mission is that they do not have a heart for God. As John Piper says in his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, "The vision of God comes first. Savoring God precedes spreading His gospel."

Secondly, we must have a right perspective on prayer. Prayer has many purposes in our lives. Prayer is for the praise and worship of God. It is the spiritual catalyst for personal spiritual growth. Many times, we simply cry out for help in prayer. All of these purposes are right and good. Yet, many of us miss the strategic purpose of prayer.

Culminating Paul's passage on spiritual warfare, Paul teaches us this purpose of prayer: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:18-20). Prayer is one of God's means to accomplish His missionary purposes.

Prayer is our privilege to engage in the spiritual battle going on in our neighborhoods and around the world. It is God's wartime walkie-talkie. Sadly, many of us use prayer only as a personal and domesticated intercom. The problem comes when our prayer life is only about me, mine, and myself, that we not only domesticate prayer, but we diminish our faith. Piper insightfully says, "When we try to turn prayer into a civilian intercom to increase our conveniences, prayer stops working and our faith begins to falter."

Lastly, personal and passionate participation in Christ's mission to our neighborhoods and to the nations is for the sake of our own souls. Every day 16,000 children starve to death, and all the while, many of us are eating ourselves to death. We say that there is not enough money to tell the world about Christ. Yet of the 7 billion people on earth, 66,000 people die every day without any knowledge of Christ. The truth is that most of us have an income that exceeds 5.5 billion other people. This leaves 1.5 billion people with enough wealth to meet the needs of Christ's mission to our neighborhoods, nation, and world. Such wealth makes us more responsible to invest in Christ's kingdom. How can you use your money, opportunities, talents, relationships, time, and retirement... to serve Christ's kingdom? How can we together use who we are and what we have for the rest of our lives to esteem God's reputation and seek to build His kingdom? May we think and pray big and then begin where we are.

Do we have personal convictions about participation in God's purposes? Do we not want our lives to count for more than the moment? I am reminded of what the late missionary Nate Saint once said, "I would rather die than live my life in obscure ease." While he died a martyr's death, his legacy lives on. While we may or may not have convictions about missions, God does. He will finish His mission to the nations. The question is whether we will participate in what He is doing? I suggest John Piper has summed up God's conviction for our mission convictions, "We are either zealous senders, goers, or we are disobedient."

Great Peace in the Lord,

Eddie