

Missions Class
Supremacy of God in Worship - II
June 17, 2003

Theme: God's passion for His glory is the fuel that drives the church toward missions.

Instructional Objective: Lord willing, students will hear and understand how a truly Biblical understanding of God's nature and character propels the missionary enterprise.

Summary of Last Week

State: During last week's lesson we talked about the passion that drives the heart of God. In particular, we talked about three primary attributes of God's character that relate to his motivation in missions.

1. God is supreme in His own affections
God is not finally motivated by anything other than a love for His own name's glory and honor. This is not a sign that God is un-loving, but rather is consistent with His righteous character.
2. God acts to magnify his own glory (scripture handout).
3. God delights to magnify His glory by showing mercy to sinners.

The Right Fuel for Missions

Ask: Given these facts about God and His character, how would this serve to fuel the fire of worldwide evangelism? (note passion for God's sovereignty)

I. God works FOR His people

Perhaps the most mind-boggling truth we have touched upon yet is the truth that God does not need the work of any one on his behalf. But He goes even further than that. Not only does he not need the help of human hands, He actually is the one who works on behalf of His people.

As John Piper writes in his book "Let the Nations Be Glad,"

Missions is not a recruitment project for God's labor force. It is a liberation project from the heavy burdens and hard yokes of other gods.

Whatever it may mean to say that we serve God, it cannot be taken to mean that we, through our efforts, fill up some need or lack in God himself. In fact, He is extremely specific in his explanation through the prophet Isaiah, that it is he who serves and carries his people.

Read Isaiah 46:1-4

“ Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low: their idols are borne by beasts of burden. The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary. They stoop and bow down together; unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go off into captivity. Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

It is God who makes and carries. It is he who sustains and rescues. If we are to understand the Biblical, Christian motivation for missions we cannot miss this point. John Piper, again, gets it right when he comments on this passage of scripture saying:

The difference between the true God and the gods of the nations is that the true God carries and the other gods must be carried. God serves, they must be served. God glorifies his might by showing mercy. They glorify theirs by gathering slaves. So the vision of God as one whose passion for his glory moves him to mercy impels missions because he is utterly unique among all the gods.

(John Piper, “Let the Nations- page 32)

II. God has given us a message of joy

And not only does God give us a message that reveals the heart of his passion for his glory, he also gives us a message that is infinitely joyful and “shareable.” The call that we are told to proclaim is a call to leave the unsatisfying wickedness of self-love and seek infinitely satisfying redemption in the work and lordship of Christ.

The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad. Psalm 97:1

Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy! Psalm 67:3-4

So if this is the nature of the message we proclaim, why would such a message encourage the missionary enterprise? Good news!

Quote from Piper "A God who cannot be served is a God who can only be enjoyed."

For the Sake of the Name

So if God’s great passion is that all the people’s would find satisfaction in him. And if we are instructed to proclaim this message of joy in Christ to all. What is the final motivation for our labor to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Is it that people would delight in God and be satisfied? Yes, but that is not the end of the matter. There is something deeper still that must propel us in our passion for missions. Jesus teaches us what that is in a conversation recorded in the book of Matthew.

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields **for my sake** will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. Matthew 19:23-30 (focus on "for my name's sake")*

In Christ's gentle rebuke of Peter we see the Biblical assumption in Christian missions laid bare, that all who go out must go out "for the sake of the name of Christ." They go out with the intent to expand the praise of the name of Christ among all peoples for their good and for God's glory. That is the motive at the heart of God's passion, and his people's passion for missions.

Quote Piper "God-centered missions exist for the sake of the name of Jesus."

And this distinction is not a trivial one. Many have attempted to construct a model of missions in recent years that sees the work of helping people as the primary goal. Now don't get this wrong, helping people in any way is no bad thing, generally. And it is true that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." But a love for other people can never be the final motive of our passion to spread the Gospel. Such a love, as a final motivation would be dishonoring to God. It is for the sake of the name, that we must go out.

Paul showed great love for unbelievers. He prayed for them. He preached to them. He endured hardship and suffering to bring the Gospel to them. Yet near the end of his life, as he prepared to go face possible death in Jerusalem, he did not declare that his willingness to die was due to his love for the lost. Rather he stated clearly...

For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 21:13

In fact, as Paul, writing to the Philippians, considered his life as a whole, he declared...

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. Philippians 3: 7-8a

Paul loved the lost. But it was not finally for their sake that he left behind everything – the false righteousness of the law, the respect of the world, the goods in his home, his health, freedom and peace – it was for the sake of Christ Jesus. That was the final

motivation in the heart of Paul, it reflected the motivation in the heart of God, and it must be the motivation in our hearts as well, if we are to understand and do missions in a way that honors the one who is our Lord and our life.

The Travail of His Soul and the Right Kind of Love

State: While we should pray that God will help us love sinners, it is finally for Christ's sake that missions goes forward.

Read Dawson Quote page 38 - 39.

State: God will not allow the suffering of His Son Jesus to have been in vain!

*After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They know with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. **And glory has come to me through them.**" John 17:1-10*

This is the great point that we must understand in this lesson. Our hope in missions is that Christ will be glorified by the Father's completion of the request brought by the Son. And what is that work which the Father will certainly complete?

Giving eternal life to all those which the Father has given to the Son.

This is the great hope for our own souls and our confidence in missionary endeavors. We do not hope in the power of our own presentation. We are not moved by our altruistic attempt to improve men's lot by applying a little Christ to their lives. Our confidence in missions rests on the unshakable knowledge that God will not finally allow His Son's name to be profaned through the loss of any of His chosen children...in any nation. Missions is a project that cannot fail because it is inseparably wed to the honor of the name of God as he has freely bound himself to save every soul which was given to the Son in answer to his prayer and as a result of his great redemptive work on the Cross.

The Call

Read Piper Quote - page 40

Read Revelation 15:3-4

State: God will be glorified, the nations will praise and worship Him, and we are privileged to share in that task by inviting people everywhere to join in the Father's joy!