

Doing Missions When Dying Is Gain - Part 1

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes the urgency and certainty of missions, highlighting the role of suffering and God's sovereignty in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Duration: 24:38

Scripture: Isaiah 55:11, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 24:14, Mark 16:15, John 10:16, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Revelation 5:9

Topics: "Missions Work", "Suffering Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the promise of preaching the gospel throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations. He clarifies that 'nations' refers to people groups rather than political states. The preacher believes that this mission is certain to be accomplished because Jesus never lies and his word will never pass away. He also highlights the price of suffering that comes with this mission, but assures that the prize of satisfying the glory of God is worth it. The preacher encourages the audience to embrace this mission and allow God to bring about transformation in their lives.

Transcript

Thirty years ago, right here, on this campus, God changed my life in a way that raises the hope that tonight some amazing things are going to happen. Raise your hand if you're 20 years old. Okay.

I was 20 years old in the summer of 1966, and I had come here from Greenville, South Carolina. Southern Baptist boy, and I had grown up in White Oak Baptist Church, and something happened. I don't know what it was, psychologically, physically, relationally.

Along about the sixth grade, I began to be so nervous that I couldn't begin to speak in front of a group. My throat would close up, my hands would shake, my knees would shake, my heart would beat so fast that I could look down and see my shirt. I would be coming down the row when you're supposed to read the paragraph in the eighth grade, and I would get up and go to the bathroom and cry.

I had to give public book reports in civics, and I didn't do it. I took C's instead of that. And I came to Wheaton College, and I saw in the catalog that you had to take a speech class, and I hyperventilated.

And I said, I'll put that off to the very end, and then maybe I'll drop out of college. And in the summer of 1966, as I was wondering how in the world I would make it through classes, because some classes you

had to do public things in, Evan Welch, who was the chaplain in those days, came up to me during summer school as I was taking chemistry, trying to catch up with a pre-med course, which God mercifully delivered me from with mononucleosis. Got me on the track.

He said, do you want to pray in chapel this summer? Oh, my goodness. And I found myself saying, this is a divine moment. I found myself saying, how long do you have to pray? He said, 30 seconds.

And out of my mouth came the most unbelievable, okay. You just can't imagine what this was like. Maybe one or two or a half a dozen in this room know what I went through in high school.

I swore I'd never, if God gave me the opportunity, relive my high school years, and I wouldn't. I'd never go back again. It was awful.

And I went out on front campus, and I walked back and forth in that June hot sun, and I said, I've never done it since in exactly the same way, and I'm going to ask for some of this tonight, not publicly necessarily, but in your heart. I said, Lord, if you'll get me through 30 seconds in front of 500 people, it looked like this crowd here, I will never turn down a speaking engagement out of fear again. And you just can't imagine what that cost me to say that.

That was a vow. I vowed, and I read the Psalms, and I vowed that I would never do that. And I memorized that prayer call.

I worked on that thing. And you know the size of the pulpit over there in Edmond Chapel. I took hold of that thing, and I made it.

And I don't think I've broken my vow. Something broke. Something changed.

And God wants to change something in you tonight. I ensure that you're here because there are some trajectories of your life He wants to just do a 90 degree on. There's some bondage, like a physical, emotional thing that's got you losing in life that He wants to be done with.

So let me just pray as we get into this. Father, even here I taste some of that old nervousness. This is such a hungry crowd, and I feel so inadequate to do justice to this amazing theme of doing missions when dying is gain.

So would you come on me? And would you come on these precious people? God, the potential in this room for the nations is so great. So I ask you with all my heart, and I know that hundreds join with me in this request, that this would be an immeasurable moment in the life of world evangelization and the completion of the Great Commission and Wheaton College and the history that will be written in 50 years about the end of the millennium at this school. And I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. I'm on a mission now from my church. They let me do these things because we have a mission statement at our church, and it goes like this.

It's the mission statement of my life. That's one of the great things about hanging around a church for 17 years. Your mission statement and the church mission statement tend to meld.

And my mission statement in life and the church's mission statement is, we exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples. We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples. And I love that mission statement for a lot of

reasons.

One is because I know it cannot fail, and I know it cannot fail because it's a promise. Matthew 24, 14. This gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

And I hope that you know or are coming to these meetings so that you might learn that nations doesn't mean political states. It means something like people groups, ethnic linguistic groupings, and that we may be absolutely certain every one of them will be penetrated to the degree that you can say a witness, an understandable self-propagating witness is there, will happen. And let me give you some reasons why we can bank on that.

My outline tonight, if you like outlines from preachers ahead of time, the promise is sure, the price is suffering, and the prize is satisfying. That's my outline. Now let's start with the promise is sure for several reasons.

Number one, Jesus never lies. Heaven and earth may pass away, but my word will never pass away. And it was Jesus who said Matthew 24, 14, not me.

And so this mission that we're on together is going to finish. It's going to be done, and you can either get on board and enjoy the triumph, or you can cop out and waste your life. You have those two choices because there's not a middle choice like, well maybe it won't happen and then I can be on the best side by not jumping on board.

That won't happen. The second reason I know it's going to happen is because the ransom has already been paid for those people among all the nations. According to Revelation 5, 9, Worthy art thou to open the scroll, cut its seals, for thou wast slain, and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.

They're paid for. God's not going to go back on His Son's payment. You remember that amazing story of the Moravians.

I love the stories of the Moravians. And in northern Germany, two of them getting on a boat, ready to sell themselves into slavery as it were in the West Indies, never to come back again. And as the boat drifts out into the harbor, they lift their hands and say, May the Lamb receive the reward of His suffering.

And what they meant was, He already bought those people. And we're going to go find them by indiscriminately preaching the gospel as the Holy Spirit calls them to Himself. So I know this can't abort, because the debt has been paid for God's people everywhere in the world.

Those lost sheep, as Jesus called them, that are scattered throughout the world, that will come in, as the Father calls through the preaching of the gospel. Here's the third reason I know it's going to happen, which makes me glad that I've got this mission statement for my church. The glory of God is at stake.

I've just oodles of text written here on my notes. Let me just pick one. Romans 15, 8, and 9. Christ became a servant to the circumcised in order to confirm the truthfulness of God so that He might make strong or sure or reliable the promises made to the patriarchs and in order that the nations might glorify God for His mercy.

So the whole purpose of the incarnation was to bring glory to the Father through the manifestation of mercy to the nations. The glory of God is at stake in the Great Commission. And back in 1983 at Bethlehem Baptist Church, John Piper and Tom Steller, my sidekick of 17 years, both were met by God in amazing ways.

Tom, in the middle of the night, couldn't sleep, he got up, he put on a John Michael Talbot song, laid down on the couch, and he heard our theology translated into missions because we are a God-glory-oriented people, but we had not made sense of missions like we ought. And John Michael Talbot was singing about the glory of God filling the earth the way the waters cover the sea and Tom wept for an hour and at the same time God was moving on me and Noel to say, what can we do to make this place a launching pad for missions? And everything came together to make an electric moment in the life of our church and it all flowed from a passion for the glory of God. And I think as I listen to the worship here and as I watch what happens among you, I think you've got it.

And so I hope translations are being made from vertical to horizontal in your love for the glory of God. And my last reason for believing this promise is sure and is going to happen is that God is sovereign. God is sovereign.

A few weeks ago, I'm preaching through Hebrews and we got to Hebrews chapter 6, which is, you know, a very difficult text about whether or not these people are Christians or not because they fall away. And in verse 3 of chapter 6, I'm going to turn around and talk to this crowd for a minute. In verse... Oh, that won't work.

In... Oh, forget it. You can understand me, okay? Thank you. I've not forgotten you're there.

Shoot. In verse 3 of chapter 6, you have this amazing statement. This is just one little teeny-weeny evidence of the massive biblical evidence for why I'm a Calvinist.

A seven-point Calvinist. And the verse says, let us press on to maturity, leaving behind the former things, and this we will do if God permits. And there fell across my congregation the most unbelievable silence because they heard the implications of that.

You mean God might not permit a body of believers to press on to maturity? God is sovereign. He's sovereign in the church. He's sovereign among the nations.

And just one testimony to what I mean by that, I hope many of you read the article in CT Christianity Today a couple or three weeks ago, the retelling of the story of Jim Elliott and Nate Saint and Pete Fleming and Roger Udarian and Ed McCulley. I ought to remember that one, McCulley. Nate Saint retold the story of his dad's spearing, gutting with Alca spears in Ecuador, and he tells the story, having learned of new details of intrigue in the Alca tribe that were responsible for this killing when it shouldn't have and seemingly wouldn't have and couldn't have happened and yet did happen.

And having discovered the intrigue, he wrote this article. I want to read one sentence that absolutely blew me out of my living room chair. He said, as they described these native people, as they described their recollections, it occurred to me how incredibly unlikely it was that the Palm Beach, that was the little area on the river where they all got speared, that the Palm Beach killing took place at all.

It is an anomaly that I cannot explain outside divine intervention. I can only explain the spearing of my dad by virtue of divine intervention. Do you hear what this son is saying? God killed my dad.

He believes that. He might be in this room for all I know. And I believe that.

God killed Jesus. And according to Revelation 6,11, when you have a glimpse of the throne room and the martyrs who had shed their blood for the gospel are seen, how long, O Lord, how long till you vindicate our blood? The answer comes back. Now, I don't want you to think I said this.

I'll read it to you. Because when I say things like that, people tend to say, that's not true. God didn't kill, Nate's saying.

I think that's what divine intervention means. I cannot explain the death of my dad except by divine intervention to help bring it about. It wasn't going to happen.

It couldn't happen apart from God's intervention. Now, what John said in Revelation is, then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete who were to be killed as they themselves had been. Rest until the number that I have appointed is complete.

God's got a number of martyrs. When it's complete, the end will come. And some are in this room right now.

I believe that with all my heart. It takes no imagination, takes no guesswork. Look at the number and look at the world.

Let's move from the promise is sure to the price is suffering. Point number two. The price is suffering and the volatility in the world today against the church is not decreasing, it's increasing, especially among the groups that need the gospel.

There is no such thing as a closed country. It's a foreign notion, has no root or warrant in the Bible. It would have been unintelligible to the Apostle Paul who laid his life down in every city that he went to.

Therefore, there are martyrs in this room. Statistically, it's easy to predict. Last Sunday or two, what was it, two Sundays ago, three, was a focus on the suffering church and many of you were involved in it.

This World Missions Fellowship was involved in it and you all saw videos or heard stories about places like Sudan where the Muslim regime is systematically ostracizing, positioning and starving Christians so that about 500 martyrs a day are happening in Sudan today. China, who knows? Indonesia, I get emails. Big conflagration in eastern Indonesia in the last couple of weeks with many churches being burned and people being killed.

And I get very tired of people coming to look at staff positions in my church, which is downtown Minneapolis and we all live in the inner city, which is no big deal because there's no inner city in Minneapolis. Don't think Cabrini-Green when you think inner city. And one of the first questions they ask is, will my children be safe? And I want to say, would you ask that question tenth and not first? I'm just tired of hearing that.

I'm tired of American priorities. Whoever said that your children would be safe in the call of God? YWAM is a wild-eyed radical group that I love. I got an email on September 1st, 150 men armed with machetes.

This is India. Surrounded the premises occupied by YWAM team in India. The mob had been incited by other religious groups in an effort to chase them off.

As the mob pressed in, someone in a key moment spoke up on the team's behalf and they decided to give them 30 days to leave. The team feels they should not leave and that their ministry work in the city is at stake. Much fruit has been seen in a previously unreached region and there is great potential for more.

In the past when violence has broken out between rival religious groups, people have lost their lives. Please pray for them to have wisdom. Now, this is exactly the opposite of what I hear mainly in America as people decide where to live, for example.

Not if there are 150 people with machetes surrounding my house. I don't want to leave because this is where I'm called and this is where there's need. Would you please join me in reversing American evangelical priorities so that you don't ask those questions, so that you don't assume.

It seems to be woven into the very fabric of our consumer culture that we move toward comfort, toward security, toward ease, toward safety, away from stress, away from trouble, away from danger and it ought to be exactly the opposite. He who would come after me letting take up his cross and die. Somebody asked me why I was coming down here.

I said, I'm coming to do Bonapheronim. He who would come after Jesus must come and die. I just don't get it.

I just don't get it. It's the absorption of a consumer, comfort, ease, culture that permeates the church and creates little ministries and churches in which safe, secure, nice things are done for each other and little safe excursions out to help save some others. But oh, we won't live there and oh, we won't stay there.

Not even in America. Not to mention Saudi Arabia. I was in Amsterdam a couple of weeks ago talking to another wild-eyed wonderful missions group, Frontiers, led by Greg Livingstone.

What a great group. 500 people sitting in front of me who risk their lives every day among Muslim peoples and to listen to them and to know that right there they're getting emails and they stand up and they read the emails. Email number one, please pray for X. He was stabbed in the chest three times yesterday and the worst thing is his children were watching him.

He's in the hospital. He's in critical condition. He's a missionary in a Muslim world, in a Muslim area.

Let's pray for him. We go to prayer. Next day, email comes.

This time, six Christian brothers in Morocco have been arrested. Let's pray for them. Right on through the conference.

And here they are and they're there and ready to go back. They've come for encouragement. They've come to be stirred.

You think I'm going to come back to America and be the same? You think I'm going to stand up in front of my church and say, let's just have nice, comfortable, easy services. Let's just be comfortable and secure. Golgotha is not a suburb of Jerusalem.

Let us go with Him outside the gate and suffer with Him and bear reproach. Hebrews 13. But, I haven't said the main thing about the price yet of getting the job done, that there will be martyrs, there must be suffering, because suffering is the means and not just the price.

It's the means. Now here's what I have in my mind. I'm going to read a verse for you that's very important.

This is Colossians 1.24. A few years ago, maybe two or three, I can't remember. It just came crashing in on me with its meaning. I'll show you how I got it.

Now I rejoice, Paul says, in my sufferings. He was a very strange person. I rejoice in my sufferings.

Very counter-cultural, very un-American, very counter-human. Very strange person. I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.

And in my flesh, this, in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of his body, the ingathering of God's elect, in filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. Now that's on the brink of blasphemy.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5755.mp3>

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