

What Will Keep You on the Mission Field?

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer's sermon emphasizes the necessity of understanding God's mercies and the call to self-sacrifice for effective ministry and missions.

Duration: 47:19

Scripture: Lamentations 3:22, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Missionary Work"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of practical religion and giving one's life away to God. He believes that many people in churches are unconverted or lack a true understanding of God's mercies revealed in Jesus Christ. The preacher shares his personal experience of studying the Scriptures intensively and encourages others to do the same in order to truly know God and grow spiritually. He also highlights the challenges faced by missionaries and emphasizes the need for prayer and study in order to effectively share the message of God.

Transcript

Please open up your Bibles to Romans 12, verse 1. Before we read, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I come before you in the name of your Son, and Lord, my strength is found in this, that your mercies are new every morning, and he has shed his own blood for my soul, that Christ has regarded my helpless estate. Father, I pray that you would take these rags and get some glory out of them for the sake of your dearly beloved people.

In Jesus' name, amen. I so appreciate what our dear brother said before my coming up here to the pulpit, and it reminds me of how weak and how feeble that we truly are. There have been many things that I have spoken in my life from pulpits that I would stand by unto the death, but mixed with that are always remarks and sayings and frivolous words that if we could lasso them and pull them back, we surely would.

Now, we all know about the Puritans, that if one wanted to sit down and write a small tract, he would sit down and in one day he would write 800 pages. That is a sign of their brilliance and possibly our ignorance. But to make a remark that John Owen wrote 37,000 pages that he could have reduced down to three is absolutely absurd.

It takes me as long to read three of his pages as it would 87,000 books written today, but it is well worth it. Before I get to my text, let me share something of my testimony. When I was converted at the University of

Texas, I was immediately introduced to men like E.M. Bounds, Praying Hyde, Leonard Ravenhill, C.T. Studd, Hudson Taylor and my dearest and longest friend, George Mueller.

And from them, I learned things about prayer and I learned to seek God. I learned about the inside of a closet. And to pray and to tarry and to wait upon my God.

And to believe that I should never believe that what has been given me in the new covenant is less than what has been given in the old. That if there were workings of God in the old, surely there are workings of God and miraculous things that happen among us to whom the end of the ages has come. That we should expect great things in answer to our praying.

And that if we would tarry with him, we would see his power and his presence in our life. But as I would go out on the street and preach, I started out as a street preacher. That's why I always tell young preachers who are looking for a place to preach that there's a pulpit on absolutely every corner.

But with all my praying and all my misguided zeal, there was very little power. To some degree, there was great things God did, but in my own heart there was something missing, missing, missing. And so as I was directed, I went to seminary.

A by no means small seminary at the time, I believe the largest in the world. And I studied with all my might. I took the most difficult professors, Greek, Hebrew, history, systematic, but I found nothing there.

There were a few good men. A few men who walked with God and loved God, but basically I found nothing there because they taught me all the theology that closed every church in Germany. I was taught Karl Barth, Otto Weber, Jürgen Moltmann, higher criticism on and on and on.

And I think the only thing that kept me from becoming a liberal was the grace of God, the providence of God, and the fact that it's very difficult to be a liberal and a street preacher at the same time. I can remember going to class one day in systematic and we were studying eschatology and I began to weep. Not make a show, but I guess tears were running down my face as I thought about the street people that lived with me.

I lived down on the street at that time with street people and I thought about how if Christ came back at that moment, they would surely go to hell without a doubt. The professor noticed the tears coming down my cheek and after class he walked up to me with some encouraging words. He put his arm around me and he said this, Paul, don't take this so hard.

Don't be surprised if on the day of judgment, Jesus lets all the goats jump in the sheep line. But I went to Peru as a missionary in no way qualified. We come to think today that everyone who wants to be a missionary can be a missionary.

That's as absurd as saying everyone who wants to be an elder can be an elder. There are requirements. Requirements of theology, requirements of character.

You simply cannot get around the demands of Scripture, but in God's providence, I was allowed to go. But there wasn't other than a prayer life and zeal. There wasn't much to say.

I learned the ways to do evangelism, get people to jump through certain evangelical hoops. And if they say yes, after each question, you popishly pronounce them to be born again. But then I came into contact with

an ex-Catholic priest by the name of Jesus Hurtado, who had been converted.

Brilliant man, Latin, Greek, just absolutely brilliant man. And after he was converted, he decided that he would go to Germany where the Reformation occurred in order to learn the truths of Scripture. But when he got there, he discovered they were doing the same thing that the Catholic Church was doing.

So he came back to Peru and he started a Bible Institute and he asked me if I would teach. I thought, well, you know, I've been to seminary. I know Greek.

I'll I'll help you out. And this is where God truly began to change my life, young man. Because this man, Jesus Hurtado, was so sick and tired of getting everything but Scripture.

That the first semester that I taught was this, the students read through the entire Bible, 10 chapters a day. They write out a chapter summary, they write out a commentary of each chapter. I mean, it was phenomenal.

It was hours and hours of work a day just in the scriptures. And then they would come to class. And the only thing that class was was simply ask the teacher all your questions.

So I began to study scripture about 10 hours a day, because even though I graduated near the top of my class in seminary, I didn't know the scriptures. And just hours and hours and hours after making my way through the first five books of the Pentateuch, I discovered I was no longer a Baptist because I had gone to a Baptist seminary and the things that I was learning there was nothing of what they taught me. And so I decided that I would go back to the States for a month or two.

Try to figure out what am I? This was after I finished the entire course, we'd gone through the entire Bible. I went back to the States to discover who do I belong to? And someone handed me a book by Boyce, the abstract of principles. I began to read it and I realized that I had not stopped becoming a Baptist.

I realized that I had become one. But then. The door began to open.

With throughout history. Jewels that God had given us. There was Spurgeon and I read him.

There was Edwards and Whitfield. And Owen. And my my lovely John Flavel.

Ms. Rutherford. And on and on and on. Now, what did this do to me? I am glad that what I heard from them.

Was a confirmation of what I had learned in Scripture, only I couldn't think it nor say it as good as they could. But this is the greatest thing I learned from them. As Paul tells the church in Corinth, when you compare yourself by yourself, you are not wise when we compare ourselves to others in the circle of contemporary Christianity.

We are not wise when we compare ourselves to Scripture. There is great wisdom there, but there is also the danger if we separate ourselves from history, that we will interpret Scripture through the eyes of our own culture. But when we take a look throughout Christian history.

And discover the men and women of God. That he has most used. That show greatest evidences of piety and the power of God, and we begin to compare our theology and our way of life to them, it raises the bar, it raises the standard.

And I want to encourage you young men and women who desire to be missionaries, it is not your right. It is a privilege. As I said last night.

People do not need your life and they do not need your zeal and they do not need all your well-meaning endeavor. Don't go to the mission field. Unless when you go there, you can open your mouth and instruct them in the things of God.

Well, let's go to our sermon. Romans chapter 12, verse one. Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies, a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Paul was an apostle and he had an apostolic ministry, but at the same time, don't think of him as not having the heart of Christ or having a heart of a pastor. He cared deeply for people.

I am very, very afraid, although I greatly appreciate this newfound desire to do everything for the glory of God and to do missions for the glory of God and to preach for the glory of God. But that in itself can also become twisted because sometimes it's used as an excuse to not have a passion for people. To not have a love for people.

We must always do all things first and foremost for the glory of God, but truly, if we are doing that, if we are loving the Lord, our God, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we will love our neighbor as ourself. We will care for people, especially. When we know that we can pick the worst of all out of the lot, the worst person on the face of the earth, and we know that we would make them look like a choir boy if it were not for the grace of God in our life, and therefore we should urge people on to truth for the glory of God, but for their benefit also.

And I can see this in Paul. He says, therefore, I urge you, brethren, one of the greatest needs in the church today. My wife, when she first came to America, she said the first thing that she noticed is that it seemed that Christians in America were so thin skinned.

She said we considered it the job of our pastor to rebuke us both publicly and privately, to watch over our souls, to urge, urge us, encourage us to tell us when we're wrong. It seems that American Christians will have no part of this. They consider it an attack when exactly it's one of the greatest expressions of pastoral love that a man will risk his relationship in order to honor God and to save souls.

And we see this in Paul. He is urging, I will not lose sleep tonight. Because people in the world lack self-esteem.

I will not lose sleep tonight because they're not having their best life now or they're not being all that they can be or their checkbook is not balanced. I will lose sleep tonight if I lose sleep tonight because men will stand naked before God and be cast into hell. When I preach and when you preach, whether here or in the mission field, you cannot simply think that you're just a communicator of truth and you leave it there.

You must preach as a dying man to dying men. And I see that in Paul. There was a passion.

There was an urging. He wasn't simply satisfied if he preached well or communicated truth. He longed for God to be honored among men and he longed.

For men. To be holy, to be Christlike and to be able to rejoice in the benefit of their great salvation, we ought to be a people given to urging our brethren. To greater and greater godliness, to greater and greater piety, to abound further and further in love.

He says, I urge you, brethren. What is he going to urge them to do? To do the most difficult, scandalous, in some cases, some would say preposterous thing a person could ever urge another person to do, to to give their life away. Do you know, even the devil had it right in this sense.

You can take away a man's goods, his houses, his lands. You can do absolutely anything to him. But the moment you touch his flesh is when you're truly going to test this man.

To give away a car, a home, a tithe. Is a small thing, but to ask a man to give away his life. I know there is so much romantic notion about missions, but Amy Carmichael, Elizabeth Elliott's book, it's right.

Missions is only this, an opportunity to die. An opportunity to give your life away for something much larger than yourself, much greater than yourself. So he is going to ask these people to do what some would consider almost cultic, absurd, ridiculous, immoral to give their life away, to offer their life.

Now, you're going to need strong medicine to motivate a person to something such as this. What on earth or in heaven could ever motivate a man to give his life away? Notice the first word in our text, therefore. And then go on when he says, therefore, I urge you, brethren, by means, by the mercies of God.

When Paul puts, therefore, in the text, what he's doing is he's linking this text to something else. He says basically this, I'm going to urge you to give your life away to God, to offer it up as a living and holy sacrifice to God. Now, I'm going to do so on the basis of the following, the first 11 chapters of this book that outline for you the mercies of God.

Paul does the same thing in the book of Ephesians, the deepest theology, I believe you'll ever find, or the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians, mystery upon mystery of God. But he comes to chapter four after speaking of all the great things God has done in Christ. He comes to chapter four and he says, therefore.

Now. We're going to go on to practical religion, we've gone into the theology, now we're going to go into the praxis based upon what God has done for you in Christ. Lay down your life.

And this is absolutely spectacular. This is what makes Christianity something other than slavery or a drudgery. We give our lives away as people who are mesmerized by something, by people who have seen something so great that they consider it a small thing to give their life away.

I would submit to you this morning that the reason why so people are so grudging and sparing with the way they give their life away to God, it is because they do not know the mercies of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Many people in our churches are absolutely unconverted to start off with. But even those who are truly converted, they languish in poverty, even in the middle sometimes of sound expository preaching.

And why is that? I've come to a conclusion. You can obey all the laws of expository preaching and still the preaching be Christless. You have to understand that when you come to a text and you preach the text, it must still all be about Christ or it'll be nothing more than a quaint moral teaching.

That is why we see Spurgeon's sermons enduring and enduring. It is because every time he took a text, he made his way to Christ immediately. It was all about Christ.

I would submit to you that every word in this book is about Christ. I would submit to you that nothing in this book can be understood apart from Christ. I would submit to you that everything God the Father has ever done, he has done for Christ, by Christ, through Christ and in Christ, outside of Christ.

There is nothing. Nothing exists. Everything is absolutely absurd.

And Paul comes to these people asking them to do the unthinkable until he brings forth the motivation. From where does self-sacrifice come? Is it just that, well, the kingdom of God advances violently and the violent take it by force? There's just some men who are full of determination and will to do the right thing and they give their life away. If that's true, it's idolatry and it's self-worship.

As Brother Charles Leiter, who is here, has said to me several times, those men who violently take the kingdom by force, they are not violent in their strength and self-will. They are violent in that they are desperate. They know their weakness, they know their need, and that knowing of their weakness makes them so desperate they grab a hold of the kingdom with all their might.

But what makes a person give his life away? I would submit to you there's only one biblical reason. That they have glimpsed something of the glories of God in the face of Christ. Christianity, although it has law and an ethic and a morality, it is not about rule keeping or ethics or morality.

To make the United States of America a moral people would just make them two full sons of hell. Christianity is about Christ, it is about grace, it is about redemption. And as I said last night, if you notice that your love for God is waning or is not, it's not what it should be, as all of us should say that, or that you do not glorify God as you ought, or that you need to grow, or that you need to find power over pornography.

You do so by running to discover more of the glories of God in the face of Christ, Him. It all has to come back to Him or it's idolatry. Everything.

It is one of the reasons why I I literally hate it. When someone mentions something about systematic theology and then they themselves or someone else preface that, of course, you've got to be careful because systematic theology by itself or doctrine by itself can make you cold and and without fruit and full of pride. I don't agree with that statement at all.

Truth can never have a bad effect on a person. Good theology is always going to create fire. That's one of the ways that you know it's good theology.

And if it doesn't create fire, it's not the fault of truth. It's either being taught incorrectly or being listened to by unconverted ears. You want to be filled with fire.

You want to be able to go out there and lose your life for the sake of Christ. It's rather easy endeavor. Just know him.

His glory, his beauty. His power, his life. Know what God has done for you in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I mean, look at what we've done, we have become instead of following Jonathan Edwards, we followed Benjamin Franklin. We have followed pragmatism instead of correct thinking. The church is in trouble,

so that's what they say.

Anyways, the problem is most of what they call the church is not the church and the church is not quite as in trouble as everybody thinks. As a matter of fact, the church today is absolutely beautiful. She's glorious.

She's humble. She's broken and she's confessing her sin. The problem is what everybody's calling the church today isn't a church.

Basically, by and large, what's called church today is nothing more than a bunch of unconverted church people. With unconverted pastors, what you have to see is this. We try to help people by giving them principles and there are principles in the Bible.

We try to help them by giving them 10 ways to do this and that and discipleship courses and all sorts of things in order to make people grow. Teach them who God is. Show them the works of God.

Teach them about Jesus Christ. The problem is many pastors can't do that because it's hard work to search out that treasure. Missionary.

If you're going to be any counted all in the field, then know this, you're going to be talked about poorly by all the other missionaries, just like praying Hyde. It was said that praying Hyde was lazy and all sorts of things because all he would do is stay in his room and pray. Well, I think if you're going to be a missionary of any count, this is what you must do.

Stay in your room, not only pray, but study. So that when you walk out of that room, you have something to say about God. And so that you will be able to walk out of that room.

Listen to me, I've been there, done that, got the T-shirt. You walk out there in all your zeal in the middle of the plaza and you begin to preach and you think as a young missionary that angels are going to drop out of heaven and the hallelujah chorus is going to be sung. Millions of people are going to be converted.

They're going to toss you on their shoulders and build a statue of you. That's not going to happen. What's going to happen is this.

You're going to go there and you're going to preach and you're going to preach. And when a crowd starts listening to you, God, somebody somewhere is going to rise up and call you a demon. The entire crowd is going to turn on you.

They're going to grab your little pulpit and your makeshift microphone and all your little tracks and they're going to throw you out on the street. It's going to take a lot more than a romantic zeal for missions to make you get up, pick up your pulpit, your tracks and walk right back in there and preach again. It's going to take a passion for God that is created out of knowing him.

And that's the same for everything in the Christian life. I must know God to be holy. So that the knowledge I have of him.

Eclipses everything else in the world. I'm not strong enough to battle between two opposing arguments, but I have discovered this. God is who he says he is.

And he is more glorious than anything this world could put forth. So if I truly know him and I truly see him. And his glories eclipse the glories of this temporal world, then it is not very difficult to make a decision

anymore because you become a man a prisoner.

Paul is going to urge them. But Paul, in a way, is going to seek to imprison them. Paul called himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

I believe that he meant more than just chains on his hands, don't you say? He really was a prisoner. The love of God had captured him, so he no longer belonged to himself. It's such a revelation of the glory of God in the person of Christ that he had become captivated.

That's what you need. Just being holy so that you can be used is not strong enough. Just being holy so that so that the church doesn't have a bad reputation is not strong enough.

Just going to the mission field because people need Jesus is not strong enough. The only thing that can hold you on course is if you become a prisoner. Of the grace of God, the revelation of God, it is amazing.

How greater and greater understanding, intimate understanding of the person of God in the gospel, it in itself separates you. It's so mesmerizes you, it's no longer a man who looks at the world and looks at Christianity and then tries to make a decision which one he should follow. But it is a man almost in a trance who has caught a glimpse of something of Christ and can no longer even look to the world.

This is what Paul is urging. He says, I urge you, brethren, by this, by the knowledge of who God is. And the glory of God in the person of Christ and his cross.

Now, I'm not going to be able to get through these two verses, I can see that, but let me say this. The greatest malady. For the true church in America is that she does not know her God.

Along with that is this. We have I call it gospel reductionism. We have taken, as Paul told Timothy, the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

And we've reduced it down to four spiritual laws or five things God wants you to know, and where's the power in that? Not only is there no power in that for evangelism, let me say this, and it's far more important, there's no power in that for the Christian life. You see, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not Christianity 101. It's not the first little truth that you learn.

So that you can be saved and then a little thing or steps that you take to other people and share with them so they can also make their decision. The gospel is everything. Let me let me put it in this way.

There's much talk today about the second coming of Jesus Christ, how it will occur, when it will occur, what will be the events preceding and what will follow and all these different things. Let me assure you of one thing. You will understand everything about the second coming of Jesus Christ on the day it occurs.

I can promise you that. But I can also tell you this, you will pass an eternity of eternities and you will never even begin to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not for spiritual laws.

It's not. It's not Jesus. Do you know you're a sinner? Do you want to go to heaven? Would you like to pray this prayer? The gospel is what the entire Bible is about.

It is the greatest manifestation of God that we will ever have. And I will submit to you that we will spend all of eternity tracking out what God has done for us in Christ and in the cross of Christ. And if you can ever see that.

I have spent literally the last 12 years of my life, hours and hours, almost hours and hours a day doing one thing, reading and writing about Christ died for me. I haven't even begun. I can't sleep at night because of it.

And what I want you to see is you don't need so much trappings. You only need to realize where the treasure is found. It's found in the cross of Christ.

And that truth will carry you anywhere the providence of God decrees for you to go. That is the power of missions. God becoming flesh, dying under the wrath of God, that God might be just in the justifier of men.

What more do you need? There's an eternity. There's an eternity of worship. In this one thing, Christ died.

For sinners, you see, here's the problem, you come to me and you say, Brother Paul, I need zeal, I need I need something to compel me. You need the cross. We I know about that, but no, you don't know about it.

No, you haven't even begun. It's just like when you finish your Bible Institute here, don't think, well, I've learned systematic. So now I'm going to go out and minister.

No, you haven't begun. You haven't even begun to learn systematic. You have learned a few tools to begin to study systematic.

You have learned a few tools to begin to endeavor to know more about the cross of Christ and that knowing and seeking will last for eternities. And it will be these things that empower you in your Christian life, and that's why it says, therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice. Now, I know the time is short, but let me just let me just put emphasis here on this word bodies.

I think sometimes I read the Scriptures and things stand out to me and I think the Holy Spirit is so wise. God is so brilliant. This this this Bible must be inspired.

Notice he doesn't say present your hearts. Or present your minds. Present your bodies.

I think this word helps us to avoid a super spirituality. It helps us to avoid a superficiality. We live in a world today that has somehow managed theologically to to cut off the heart from the rest of our person and make it a separate entity that does not affect the rest of us.

We talk to people all day, we could dismiss right now, go to every tavern in Owensboro and find people all over, drunks and the like, who've given their heart to Jesus. But nothing else has followed. But what you must understand is the heart is the very essence of what a man is.

It's the very core of his being. It's the center of absolutely his entire being. When you talk about ontology and you begin to go in depth and in depth, you finally find yourself at the center of the heart.

The heart is everything you are. And it is an absolute ontological impossibility to give someone your heart with abs without everything else going with it. And that's why Paul is not speaking in terms of giving Jesus your heart or giving God your heart or even giving your mind.

But the entirety of your person. One of the things I most appreciate about the Puritans is this. They sought, it seems to me, with everything they had, they endeavored to submit every aspect.

Of their life. To Christ, to bring every thought and to under the lordship of Jesus Christ, Paul is not asking for a partial giving away of self here. He is commanding, demanding, urging, pleading, a giving over of all that you are to him.

A great momentous decision. It is this context, this idea of how long will you live between two opinions once and for all make a decision once and for all by the grace of God, turn yourself over and begin to work that out in your life. I submit to you a few questions.

Have you submitted your mind to Christ? You say, well, what does that mean, Brother Paul? Well, go to Scripture. Read through, I like this better than using a concordance, start in Genesis and read through the entire Bible and every passage in Scripture that deals with the mind, pull it out and create a systematic theology with regard to how your mind can be submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ, your eyes. What does the Bible say about your eyes and your ears? And your tongue and your hands and your feet.

And your body and the way you clothe it, what does the Bible say about relationships that you are in, what are you commanded to do by Scripture? You see, my dear friend. Without a vision, the people perish and that should not be used by pastors who want to go into a building program. That's not what that text is talking about.

Where there is no vision of God's law, the people run unrestrained. I want to talk to you, young person. You've learned doctrines of sovereign grace.

You read the Puritans. Congratulations. Have you gone through Scripture to discover what God says about relationships? And sought to understand it and submit your life to it in obedience.

I know I sound like a 1960s fundamentalist preacher. Let me ask you a question. Have you gone into the Scriptures to find the principles laid out for clothing and etiquette? And have you decided that you would submit your life to those directives? You see, we talk about being biblical in our worship.

Have you gone through Scripture to discover what God desires out of worship? Well, you know, we love worship this way. I don't care how you like worship because that's not the point. What has God said? You see, in this idea, we can romance this thing to death.

We can spiritualize it to death. We can say, oh, I've given my someone says, well, I've given my life to the mission field. That does not mean at the same time that you have given your heart to God because you can go to the mission field and be godless.

And carnal and trite, you'd be better off joining National Geographic than you would a mission agency. Are you seeking in simplicity to examine your life? I'm not talking about finding legalistic inferences and forcing them upon yourself. I'm talking about the great principles of Scripture dealing in every aspect of your personal life, applying them to you and seeking to obey them.

Let me ask you a question. If you go to the mission field without taking what I have said as a serious endeavor. Isn't there the possibility that the only thing you're going to do there? After you have crossed land and sea is make a convert like yourself, that's nothing more than a twofold son of hell.

I mean, after all, my greatest fear, one of my greatest fears is that Fidel Castro is going to die or has already died and that the wall around Cuba is going to fall. That's one of my greatest fears. Do you want to know why? Because every form of American churchianity that exists is going to make its way over there.

I remember speaking with Conrad the first time that that I went over there to Mr. Mabewis and he said the first thing we always like to tell people who come over to teach that you're not bringing God with you. He was here long before you bought your ticket. There isn't a whole lot of American christianity, folks, that needs to be exported.

Unless like Ravenhill says, we put it on some kind of a raft and send it off to a lone island. And as after it's going away from the dock, we all sing the doxology. If we're going to endeavor to work in missions, then we must be motivated by a God that we know, a gospel that we know, and we must be a people who have endeavored with great force to examine their lives in the light of Scripture.

And conform their lives to what Scripture says, how much of what you have, even the way you sit in a chair, is formed by those around you. And not by Scripture. Something to think about.

Let's pray, Father, I pray that, Lord, you know. That you would use this to begin some on a journey. Of knowing you.

Seeking to know that which brings delight, seeking to transform, conform their lives to it. Father, help us who have begun the journey long ago to not grow weary, but to seek to know you more, to seek to understand your will. To love what you love and hate what you hate.

To be a simple people, an obedient people, a people motivated by the gospel. And drawn to the gospel. In Jesus name, Amen.

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