

Doing Missions When Dying Is Gain - Part 2

by John Piper

The sermon emphasizes the importance of missionary work and the call to suffer for the sake of the gospel, trusting in the promises of God for the future.

Duration: 22:37

Scripture: Hebrews 10:32

Topics: "Missions Work", "Suffering Joy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts a story of a tired and discouraged man who preaches the gospel in a village. Despite being mocked and driven out of town, the man falls asleep under a tree. He is startled awake by the whole town surrounding him, and they ask him to explain why he endured blistered feet to come talk to them. The man preaches the gospel, and the entire village believes. The speaker then emphasizes the importance of finding the resources to live a life like this by believing in the promises of God, citing Hebrews 10:32-34 as his favorite text. He encourages the audience to endure hardships and rejoice in suffering, as it is an opportunity to share the message of Jesus with those in need.

Transcript

What does he mean by filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ? He does not mean, I think we would all agree, he improves upon the merit and the atoning worth of Jesus' blood. That's not what he means. Well, what does he mean that he completes what is lacking in the afflictions of Jesus? And you know where I found the answer? I typed into my little computer Bible program this Greek word for fill up, a complete, and I typed in the word Hustero or whatever the noun form of that is for lacking and asked, show me, Mr. Computer, where both of these occur anywhere else in the Greek Bible, and there's only one other place.

I'll read it to you. It's in Philippians and it's in chapter 2 verse 30. The situation is that Epaphroditus, remember him, was sent by the Philippian church over to Paul in Rome and he risks his life to get there and Paul extols him as risking his life and tells the Philippians they should receive such a one with honor because he was sick unto death and risked his neck to complete their ministry to him.

And here's the key parallel verse. Because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. The only other place where these two words come into conjunction.

To complete what is lacking in your service to me. And I opened up my 100 year old Vincent's commentary on Philippians and read an explanation of that verse, which I think is a perfect interpretation of Colossians 1 24, and I'll read you Vincent's words. He said, the gift of Paul, the gift to Paul from the Philippians, was a gift of the church as a body.

It was a sacrificial offering of love. What was lacking was the church's presentation of this offering in person. This was impossible and Paul represents Epaphroditus as supplying this lack by his affectionate, zealous ministry.

So the picture is here's a church that wants to get love in the form of money over to Rome and they can't do it. There's too many of them. It's too long.

It's too far. And so they say Epaphroditus represent us and complete what is lacking in our love. There's nothing lacking in our love except the expression of our love in person there.

Take it, communicate it to Paul. Now that's exactly what I think Colossians 1 24 means. Jesus dies and he suffers for people all over the world in every nation.

He suffers. And then he is buried and according to the Scriptures he's raised on the third day and he ascends into heaven and he reigns over the world and he leaves a work to be done. And Paul's self-understanding of his mission is that there's one thing lacking in the sufferings of Jesus.

The love offering is to be presented in person in the body of Christ through missionaries to the peoples for whom he died. And he says I do this in my sufferings. In my sufferings I complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.

Which means that Christ intends for the Great Commission to be a presentation to the nations of the sufferings of his cross in the sufferings of his people. That's the way the Commission will be finished folks. And if you sign up tonight with your heart, that's what you sign up for.

That's the way it'll get done. About when was it? Three years ago I was working on that green book on missions and I hid away over at Trinity Seminary in Deerfield. I hid.

Don't know I'm there. Don't anybody bother me. My wife and kids are at home.

I'm working 18 hours a day. Stay away from me. And I get word J. Odwell Sanders is in chapel.

89 years old. Veteran, great, missions leader. I said, ooh, shall I go public? And show up over there and have to talk to a lot of people and get dinner engagements and all this stuff and not get anything done.

But I want to hear him. So I sneak into the back of chapel and listen to him. And here's this 89 year old man.

He's dead now. He's Jesus. And he stood up there 89 years old.

I'm just oozing with admiration and desire to be like this when I'm 89. And he tells the story that so embodies Colossians 124. I wanted to share it with you in a nutshell.

I can't remember all the details, but here's the gist of it. He said there was in India an evangelist who tromped across the roads to various villages preaching the gospel. Simple man, no education, loved

Jesus with all his heart, ready to lay his life down.

And he came to a village without the gospel. It was late in the day. He was very tired.

He comes into the village. He lifts up his voice. He shares the gospel with those gathered in the square and they mock him, deride him and drive him out of town.

And he's so tired. There aren't any emotional resources left. He lies down under a tree, utterly discouraged, goes sound asleep, doesn't know if he'll ever wake up because they might come kill him for all he knows.

And suddenly, just after dusk, he's startled and he wakes up and the whole town, it seems like, is around him and they're looking at him. And he thinks he's a goner and he's trembling there. And one of the big men in the village says, We came out to see what kind of man you were and when we saw your blistered feet we knew you were a holy man and we want you to tell us why you got blistered feet to come talk to us.

And he preached the gospel and according to J. Oswald Sanders, the whole village believed. That's what Paul means by I complete in my sufferings what is lacking in the afflictions of Jesus. Now, I have one other little parenthesis here about J. Oswald Sanders and I can't resist this because I know there's more people here than just 20 year olds.

He's 89 years old and he said, I got caught at the end of the service and got invited to lunch with J. Oswald Sanders. God works all things together for good. And I sat across from this man and he said, I've written a book a year since I was 70.

18 books after 70. And I have people in my church and they're all over America quitting on life at 65 and dying on the golf course in Nevada. When they ought to be laying their lives down among the Muslims like Raymond Lowe.

Remember that story? Raymond Lowe, 12th century oriental scholar, Muslim missionary, retires, comes back to Italy, does his oriental language thing for a while, quits that, begins to feel like what am I doing? I'm gonna die here in Italy. Why not die in Algeria? Across the Mediterranean. And so knowing that's what it would cost him to preach publicly, he gets on a boat.

I forget his age. It was 80 something too. Crosses the Mediterranean, stays underground for a little while, encouraging the church.

Then he decides this is as good a time as any. It's better than dying in a nursing home. And he stands up and he preaches and they kill him.

What a way to go! What? I mean, I really mean this. I really mean this. Listen, you 60 year old folks, 50, I'm 50.

I'm almost there. I'm getting letters from the AARP. None of you guys know what that is.

Association of Retired Persons or something like that. I'm 50 and they're trying to get me on their lists so I can have a discount on the train or they have planes now. I forgot.

I'm so old. I'm almost there. So I'm talking almost to myself and my church have heard me say this.

They're going to hold me to the fire on this one. That when you're old, you not only don't have anything to lose in martyrdom, you get discount fares. And I really mean it.

I really mean it. Why should we think that putting in our 40 or 50 years in the bank or in the insurance company or in the church should mean we play for the last 15 years before we meet the king? I don't get it. It's American lies.

That's all it is. We're strong at 65. We're strong at 70.

My dad, oh bless my dad's heart, 77. I can remember when my mom was killed and he was almost killed in a bus accident in Israel and I picked him up 10 days later with her body and him in the ambulance and all the way home from Atlanta to Greenville, he lay there with his back laid wide open because they couldn't stitch the wounds, they were so bad, saying, God must have a purpose for me. God must have a purpose for me.

God must have a purpose for me. And here we are, 22 years later and his life has exploded with ministry. He's working harder today at 77 for the nations than ever before.

He's got these little lessons that he does in Easley, Georgia and little tapes that he makes and they're in 60 nations with about 10,000 people believing on Jesus every year because God spared my dad and caused him not to believe in retirement. Now, I don't think you have to stay in the same job after 65. I got to stop this.

You're young people. This is another sermon and I'm supposed to be down here. The price is suffering and I don't just mean price, but I mean means.

Now, last point. How do you love like that? We're going to get this. You feeling ready for this? Do you think you have it within you to be able to endure this? This is Stephen Neal's History of Missions.

Get it. Read it. And on page 161, he describes what happened in Japan when the gospel came there in the 1500s and then the emperor began to realize this incursion of the Christian faith into our religious sphere is so threatening we must end it and they ended it with absolute incredible brutality.

It was over for the church in Japan and I don't doubt that the hardness and difficulty of Japan today is largely owing to the massive triumph of the devil short term in Japan in the early 1600s like this. 27 Jesuits, 15 friars, 5 secular clergy did manage to evade the order of banishment. It was not until April 1617 that the first martyrdoms of Europeans took place.

A Jesuit, a Franciscan being beheaded at Omura at that time, and a Dominican and an Augustinian a little later in the same area. Every kind of cruelty was practiced on the pitiable victims of the persecution. Crucifixion was the method usually employed in the case of Japanese Christians.

On one occasion, 70 Japanese at Yedo were crucified upside down at low water and were drowned as the tide came in. I cried three days ago when I read that because I got a good enough imagination to picture the lapping water with your wife on one side and your 16 year old on another. Are you ready? You think you've got that within you? You don't.

No way does anybody in this room have that resourcefulness within you. Where are you going to get it? And that's what I want to close with. You're going to get it by believing promises, believing the promises of

God.

And I'll cut this real short here and take you straight to my favorite text. If you have a Bible with you, I invite you to turn to Hebrews chapter 10. Favorite text about where you get the resources to live like this.

Hebrews chapter 10. I'm going to read verses 32 to 34. Recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

Let me stop there and give you the situation as I read it. In the early days of the church, persecution arose. Some of them suffered outright and publicly and others then had compassion on them in some way.

And you'll see in the next verse that it's some of them were in prison and some of them went to visit them. So they were forced into a decision. Those who are in prison in those days depended probably for others on food and water and any kind of physical care that they would need.

But that means that their friends and neighbors have got to go public with identification. And that's risky business when somebody has been put in jail because they're a Christian. So here's the free church goes underground for a few hours and says, what are we going to do? We're going to go to Saudi Arabia or not.

And somebody said. Psalm 63 3 says the steadfast love of the Lord is better than life, better than life. Let's go.

And if Martin Luther had been there, he would have said, let goods and kindred go. This mortal life also the body they may kill. God's truth abideth still.

Let's go. His kingdom is forever. Let's go.

That's exactly what they did. Let's read the rest of it. Verse 34.

You had compassion, compassion on the prisoners and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. Here's what happened. Doesn't take any imagination.

I don't know the precise things, but here's what happened. They had compassion on the prisoners, which means they went to them. And their property, house, chariot, horses, mules, carpentry, stools, chairs, whatever, was set on fire by mob.

Or maybe just ransacked and thrown into the street with people with big knives. And when they looked over their shoulder to see what was happening back there. You tell me what they did.

What did they do? What did the text say they did? Say it loud. They rejoiced. Now if you're not like that.

Somebody bashes your computer in when you're trying to minister to them and be nice. Or you drive downtown to minister and they smash your windshield, get your radio, slash your tires. If you're not like this, then you're not going to be a very good candidate for martyrdom either.

So the question is, how do you get to be like this? I want to be like this. That's why I love this text. I want to be like this.

I make no claim to being a perfect embodiment of this. But I want to be like this. So that when a rock comes sailing through my kitchen window like it's done twice in the last couple of months, smashes the

glass, and my wife and children hit the floor, not knowing if it's a bullet or a grenade, I want to say, this is a great neighborhood to live in.

This is where the needs are. You see those five teenage kids that just rode by? They need Jesus. If I move out of here, who's going to tell them about Jesus? Everybody knows a pastor lives on this corner.

I've been there 16, I've been there 13 years. If the pastor runs, what's he got to say? This is a great place to be. When your little boy gets pushed off his bicycle and they take it and run, you say, Barnabas, you grab him by the neck while he's crying, you say, Barnabas, this is like missionary.

It's like getting ready for the mission field. This is great. And they believe that.

I gave a message on Colossians 124 in Pensacola, Florida, two years ago. I had my 16-year-old with me, Abraham, who I hope will be a student here in two years. Pray for him.

He's sitting out there, right about where you are over there. And I'm saying what I'm saying here, this kind of stuff, heavy duty, suffering, call to this. And we got in the car to go home.

And my wife said to Abraham, well, what do you think God is doing in there? He said, I'm going to buy a one-way ticket to the hardest country in the world. That's all he said. I bumped my head on the ceiling.

This is great. Thank you, Lord, for Abraham. And what you're doing in his life.

Now, I haven't gotten to the main point of the text yet. Why did they have the wherewithal to rejoice at the plundering of their property and the risking of their lives? Now we get it. Now we get it.

Here it comes. Since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. This is what I call faith in future grace.

I'm done. I'm just going to close now with just a few thoughts. There's almost all Christians in this room.

And that means that God is holding out to you absolutely indescribably wonderful promises. I will never leave you or forsake you. Therefore, you can confidently say the Lord is my helper.

I will not fear. What can man do to me? Well, the answer is he can kill you. But that is no stopping because you know what Romans 8 says.

We are counted as sheep to be slaughtered all day long. Yet, I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, nothing ultimate can harm me.

You remember what Jesus said in Luke 21? He said, some of you they will kill and some of you they will throw into prison, yet not a hair of your head will perish. They'll move your long hair when they use the sword. Or something like that.

I mean, can you give me a better interpretation? Some of you they will kill, but not a hair of your head will perish. Some of you they will kill, but not a hair of your head will perish. You interpret it.

Some of you they will kill, but not a hair of your head will perish. It's just Romans 8. Everything, including death, works together for your good. When you die, you don't perish.

To die is gain. Doing missions when death is gain.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5756.mp3>

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