

Gospel to the Nations, Generosity to the Poor

by John Piper

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the gospel, the priority of the poor, and the call to missions, highlighting the need for missionaries to take the gospel purely and proclaim it to the poor.

Duration: 36:07

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18

Topics: "Cross Cultural Missions", "Serving The Poor"

Description

In this sermon by John Piper, he discusses the importance of cross-cultural missions and the role of the poor in this mission. He emphasizes that if one's heart is set on reaching the least-reached, it will likely involve serving the poor. Piper highlights four key points from verse 10: the apostles were in agreement about the importance of the poor, it was considered alongside the purity of the gospel, Paul was not just willing but eager to remember the poor, and the priority and passion for the poor comes from God. Piper encourages the audience to consider their own calling to cross-cultural missions and invites them to stand and pray for this calling.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.desiringgod.org Galatians 2, verses 1 through 10. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

I went up because of a revelation and set before them, though privately before those who seemed influential, the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery, to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

And from those who seemed to be influential, what they were makes no difference to me, God shows no partiality. Those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised, for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles.

And when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. This weekend marks the second weekend in our Missions Conference.

And it's been our tradition for many years, I don't know how many, that at the end of these six services on this weekend, we very simply and without any manipulation or pressure, ask people to come to the front, that we might give them information about the Nurture Program, and then I pray a very special prayer of consecration. And I'm going to tell you, so that you can be praying in this direction, through these services, exactly who I would like to come. I'll put it like this, I'll say it now, and I'll say it then, at the end.

Do you believe that God is stirring in you, to move you into cross-cultural missions, sooner or later, this year or ten years from now, longer term, two years or more, not summer projects. Everybody would come, I hope, if that was the case. That's the invitation that will come.

Don't want you to be taken off guard. Don't want it to be sprung on you suddenly. That's where we're going.

And you heard me mention, you now hear me mention, that I'm praying, along with Eric and others, for 350 of you to stand at the front in these six services, saying that, at least. Let's pray. So Father, again now, I ask that, through the channel of a video recording, the downtown campus on Lord's Day morning, and every other way, on this weekend, you would work some, by awakening for the first time, this sense of stirring from God.

And others, bring to a resolved confidence, that's what these last five years have been. So come. We're asking, in accord with the command of Jesus, pray to the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers into His harvest.

That's what we're doing, in obedience to You. In Jesus' name, Amen. The first thing I want to do in this passage, is to back up to verse 6 of chapter 1, and walk with you, quickly, through the entire flow of thought, from 1.6 to 2.10. Because I don't think 2.10 is going to work, without the wider context.

Then, once we've quickly walked through, 1.6 to 2.10, we're going to turn around, and go backwards, in three steps. From poor, to gospel, to call. And we're going to end with your call.

So I hope, that as we do this exposition, frontward and then backward, your mindset will be, Lord, I am available. I didn't come into this room, perhaps, thinking that I might experience some kind of stirring, towards cross-cultural missions, but if that's what you want to do, I'm available. It's the Word of God that does this, not me.

So, let's go. Paul is astonished, that these Galatian churches, are about to abandon the Gospel. Because, some professing Christians, you'll hear why I use that phrase in a minute, have come among them, and are stressing the necessity of circumcision, for salvation.

Verse 6, I am astonished, that you are so quickly, deserting Him who called you, in the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different Gospel. And then he stresses, there is no other Gospel, that will save from sin and hell. And if anyone tells you there is, and then his language becomes controversial.

Verse 9, As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a Gospel, contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. Can I give you that in street language? Literally, to hell with him. And then he argues, for his Gospel, by saying he got it from Christ, no man.

Verse 11, For I would have you know brothers, that the Gospel that was preached by me, is not man's Gospel. For I did not receive it from any man. Nor was I taught it.

But I received it through a revelation, of Jesus Christ. Now he's got to defend that. And so he launches into his defense, he reminds them in verses 13 and 14, what a zealous persecutor of the church he was.

His argument is moving from the dramatic change in his life. And he's arguing the only explanation for moving from a zealous persecutor of the church, to a life risking promoter of the risen Christ, is this, I met him on the Damascus road, and he called me and saved me. That's his argument.

Verse 15, But when he who had set me apart from before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem, to those who were apostles before me. But I went away into Arabia, and returned to Damascus.

He's stressing his independence here. And then in verse 18, after three years, he makes a 15 day trip to Jerusalem. And he meets Peter, and he meets James the Lord's brother.

That's all he says. And then he disappears for 14 years. Into Syria and Cilicia.

That's probably hometown. That's where Tarsus is. Now the point of all that so far is to say, I didn't get it from man.

I didn't rush up to Jerusalem and say, I think I'm an apostle. Would you guys tell me the gospel? The whole point was, I didn't do that. I am not a second class apostle.

I'm not derivative from Peter. I met the king on the Damascus road. I am qualified.

I have seen the risen Christ. He called me. I didn't get called from Jerusalem.

Chapter 2. Continues the same emphasis, only he adds a new twist. He must establish unity with the original 12, or everything's coming down. Right? If you've got a split apostleship in the early church, you are split as a movement, and there would be no church.

So he's got to both be independent and be unified, and that's what these verses are now about. Verse 1. Then after 14 years, a long time, he's stressing because of his independence, I didn't hobnob with these apostles for 14 years. I went again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

That's very significant, because Titus is an uncircumcised Gentile convert to the king, the way, Christianity, and he's taking Exhibit A to test and prove the freedom of his gospel. Will they make this man be circumcised, or is the gospel that I preach going to be accepted? That's the issue. This is Exhibit A. Titus is a test case.

Verse 2. I went up because of a revelation, stressing again, I'm not just doing a man thing here. The Lord told me 14 years later, now go. And set before them, though privately, before those who seemed influential, the gospel I proclaim among the Gentiles in order to make sure I was not running in vain.

Meaning, I think, I know my gospel. I got it from Jesus. But if it's not your gospel, and you Peter and James don't recognize me and I don't recognize you, we're all running in vain.

Verse 3. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek, yet because of some false brothers, that's why I used the phrase professing Christians a few minutes ago, yet because of false brothers secretly brought in who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus so that they might bring us into slavery, to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment. So that the gospel, the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. Who's the you? Gentile believers scattered throughout Galatia.

This is a missionary vigilance over right doctrine. It's really got tense in Jerusalem, right? This really got tense. They're coming in, checking out Titus, and saying whether or not he's got to be circumcised.

And Paul calls them false brothers. That's amazing. They're Christians.

They're professing Christians. And he wouldn't budge one inch on his conviction. If you try to make circumcision necessary for salvation, you are not a Christian.

Breathtaking. Verse 8, from those who seemed to be influential, what they were makes no difference to me. God shows no partiality.

Those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. So he's still stressing his independence. Verse 7, on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, that's my unique mission, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised, the Jewish people, that's his unique mission, for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles.

And when James and Cephas and John, James, Peter, and John, the core three close apostles, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. And I think all of heaven breathed a great sigh of relief. That is one of the most important moments in the history of the world.

No under, no overstatement. That is one of the most important moments in the history of the world. Had Peter said, no, you're not preaching the gospel, they must be circumcised, there would have been no New Testament, no church, no Christianity.

This was awesome what was going on here. The apostleship, the foundation on which the church is built would have been rent asunder. And God didn't let it happen.

And we should read that and be thrilled. One more thing they agreed on. Verse 10.

Only they ask us to remember the poor. The very thing I was eager to do. Now, that's our walk through in one direction.

Let's turn around now and go backward through the text and this time we're not going through the whole thing but we're hitting on poor, gospel, calling. That's where we're going because that's the reverse order that we got them in and I hope when we are done in a few minutes on calling, this will have become very personal for many of you. Let's talk about the poor for a moment.

I want you to see four things in verse 10 and behind verse 10. One, the apostles were of one mind about the importance of the poor. There's agreement.

Second, I want you to see that it was important enough to put alongside the purity of the gospel. Third, I want you to see that Paul is not simply willing to kind of, okay, remember the poor. I've really got work to do but you only remember the poor.

Okay. But he was eager and the fourth thing I want you to see is where this priority and passion comes from. Okay? Now, the first three are crystal clear in verse 10.

No argument, I hope. Let's read it again. Only they asked us, Paul and Barnabas, to remember the poor.

The very thing I was eager to do. So, you can see they're agreed. That's easy to see.

This is the whole apostleship now agreed. Remember the poor. Number two, it's explicit added on alongside the gospel.

A lot of things go unsaid here. We can make a long list of important issues, right? That are not spoken here. This one gets spoken.

Remember the poor. The gospel was at stake. You didn't circumcise Titus.

The gospel is pure. You've got a message to take to the Gentiles. And as you go, one other thing we better make explicit.

Don't ever forget the poor. That's amazing. And then, the third is also obvious.

The eagerness of Paul. See those words? The very thing I was earnest and eager to do. This did not take Paul off guard.

Paul said, oh, I never thought of that. I haven't even done that for 14 years. That's been a blind spot in my ministry.

It wasn't. Paul says, I know that. And you watch Paul for the rest of his ministry.

And it's there in 1 Corinthians. And it's there in Romans. And he's collecting for the poor.

He's always telling the churches, there are some poor to take care of. And I'm part of what is going on here. Here's the last question.

Where did this come from? That's a pretty strong and high priority. Where did it come from? Where does this priority, this passion for the poor come from? And I think we'll just pass over one massive answer and go to one other one. The massive answer that you would all know, I'm sure, is that for Paul, I think his commitment to be compassionate towards the poor came from the gospel.

A forgiven sinner. Through the blood of Christ. Has a compassionate heart.

I could take you to parables of Jesus. That show you that. Right.

Matthew 18. But let's just leave it. That is so obvious.

If you know yourself a sinner. You look at the son of God dying for you. You embrace him and all your sins are taken away.

Though you don't deserve it at all. You are a bankrupt sinner. And all the riches of God are now yours in Christ by faith alone.

You cannot be an uncompassionate person. And if you show up in my office saying I have no compassion for the poor. I will say let's deal with you and Jesus here.

But. I want to say this. For the 12.

If you ask them. Where this come from. They're going to say.

First it comes from the cross. And then they're going to say. And we walked with him for three years.

And that's just about what we saw every day. For example. The vision of the judgment in Matthew 25.

I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.

That's the word that will be spoken to the judgment day over the people on his right hand side. The sheep. Zacchaeus gives half of his possessions away.

This rascal tax collector. He gives half of his possessions away. When Jesus comes to dinner.

The wee little man was he. I'm going to your house for tea. And he gives half of his money away.

And Jesus announces. Salvation has come to this house today. What does that mean? It means.

When I see that. I know something about what's happened here. What happens when salvation comes on your life.

Is money totally changes. The poor rise. And retirement.

And vacations. And double houses. And triple cars.

And expensive stuff goes way down. And the poor go way up. That's what happens when you get saved.

This salvation has come to this house today. Look how the money is flowing to the poor. He got invited to a feast one time.

Jesus never did treat his hosts very politely. He said to the host. Luke 14.

When you give a feast. Invite the poor. The crippled.

The lame. The blind. And you will be blessed.

Because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. Find somebody to invite for dinner who can't invite you back.

That's the paraphrase for tomorrow. Noon. The inauguration of Jesus ministry.

Luke 4.18. In the synagogue. Opening the scroll. Preaching his first sermon.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me. Because he has anointed me. To bring.

To proclaim good news to the poor. And so many more texts. Could we bring from the gospel.

So I think the answer. Where does this verse 10 come from? In Galatians 2. I think the answer is. It comes from the cross.

Lived out in the life of Jesus. And I assume therefore. That since the apostles were agreed on this.

And had it. As such a high priority. It should be crucial.

In our commitments as a church. And a people. Second step.

Moving backward. We step on verse 10. And now I'm going a second step backward.

To verse 5. The gospel. The centrality of the purity. Of the gospel.

Verse 5. Chapter 2. To them. Those who were insisting on circumcision for salvation. To them.

We did not yield in submission. Even for a moment. So that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

The nations. Oh how attractive it is. Oh how attractive it is.

At home. In a pluralistic Minneapolis. And on the mission field.

To just tweak the gospel a little bit. So as not to offend people. Just.

Paul lighten up. A circumcision is no big deal. And Paul says it pretty strongly in several ways.

He says. We did not yield. For a moment.

I think he probably would have said it like that. Not a heartbeat. Of consideration.

To that compromise. And then he calls them. In verse 4. False brothers.

It's just breathtaking. The purity. Of the gospel.

So I say to all of our missionaries. And all of our. Aspiring and dreaming missionaries.

Whether retirees. Or nine year olds. You've got to get the gospel right.

We're going to wave that banner at Bethlehem. Because all over the world. Other gospels are being preached.

Besides the gospel that was delivered. The gospel of justification. By grace alone.

Through faith alone. On the basis of Christ's blood and righteousness alone. To the glory of God alone.

No compromise. He even calls. The angel.

Who brings a different gospel. Damnable. In verse 8 of chapter 1. The point is.

That our missionaries take to the nations. The gospel. Purely.

It's really important that they get it right. Let none of our missionaries ever say. Doctrine doesn't matter.

Let none of our missionaries ever say. A little change in the gospel. Doesn't hurt anybody.

May every missionary. When they're pressured to compromise. Say.

We did not yield in submission. Even for a moment. So that.

The truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. I would call this. Tough love at home.

For the sake of the nations. We wonder sometimes about all the doctrinal squabbles. In the home front.

As though. I mean I've heard so many people respond to doctrinal controversy. Let's be about the business of missions.

Let's stop this controversy. I'm saying. Wait a minute.

This text. Says. You get it right.

Or there's nothing to take. And that includes the poor. May every missionary.

To the poor. And that's almost all of them. Say with the apostle Paul.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me. Because he has anointed me to proclaim the gospel. Pure.

Unvarnished. To the poor. It's the most important thing we have to take.

To the poor. Finally. Let's go one more step backward.

We went to poor in verse 10. And we went to gospel in verse 5. And now let's go to the calling. Back in the first chapter.

And before we look at a verse there. Let me step back to a bigger picture here. The great gospel promise and hope.

For the mission field. Is Romans 10.13. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

And that includes. A. Gentile jailer in midnight in Philippi. Hearing some Jews sing.

Funny songs. It includes. Inner city projects of Bangkok.

It includes the rubble of Pakistan. Guatemala. It's true among Somali refugees.

In. Minneapolis. All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

It's true in. Mexico and Kazakhstan and Kenya. And Cameroon.

And Russia. And Papua New Guinea. And the Philippines.

And Senegal and Japan. And Bosnia and Germany. And Ethiopia and Peru.

And Bolivia and Ecuador. And Brazil and the Czech Republic. And Austria and Syria and Ivory Coast.
And Turkey and China. And Oman and the United Arab Emirates. And England and Uzbekistan.
And Indonesia and India. And Zambia. And that's where our people are.

I hope you love giving to this church. I really hope you love giving to this church. That's where we are.
Just look at the back of your worship folder. That's where I got them. Everyone.

In every one of those countries. So many cultures. So many languages.

Everyone who calls upon the Lord in truth. The Lord Jesus Christ. The King of Kings.

Will be saved. And then Paul says. But how will they call upon him whom they haven't believed.

And how will they believe. Him of whom they haven't heard. And how shall they hear.

Without a preacher. And how shall they preach. Unless they be sent.

As it is written. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring goodness. God calls you to missions.

In a thousand ways. Wouldn't it be thrilling to spend an hour. Just asking those of you who are involved in missions or on your way.

How did God do that? We'd hear a thousand different stories. It is so thrilling. To think about how many ways.

He. Calls. Look at Paul's way.

Galatians 1 verse 15. I think this is. In one sense.

A paradigm for everybody. If you don't bring in the details of Damascus. Look at this.

Galatians 1 15. When he. Who had set me apart.

Before I was born. And who called me by his grace. Was pleased to reveal his son to me.

Then watch the logic here. In order that I might preach him among the Gentiles. In Paul's case.

The call. Was the revelation of Jesus Christ. He revealed his son to me.

In order that. Not in order that I might be a Christian. But he just kind of skips over that.

Essential. In order that I might go. The sheer sight.

Of Christ. Did it. For Paul.

And I think. Most of our callings. To whatever we do.

In the service of Christ. In one way or another. Is a fresh.

Sight of Christ. It's a fresh sight of his power. It's a fresh sight of his beauty.

It's a fresh sight of his sufficiency to save sinners. It's a fresh sight of his willingness and love to take care of me wherever I am. It's seeing Christ.

So fresh. So new. So tailor made.

For this path. I can't stay off that path. Now how about you? We're drawing to a close here.

I don't know how the Lord is going to do it. With you. But.

My question is this. In my prayer. He has a thousand ways to stir.

To stir you to the point where you must move. You must. Move.

You must venture. And you must venture to the unreached. And you must venture to the poor.

Are you aware of this fact? That 85%. Of the poorest of the poor. In the world.

Are in the 1040 window. West Africa. To the Pacific Rim.

10 degrees north to 40 degrees north. In that SWAT. In that.

85% of the world's. Poorest of the poor live. And here's the.

Remarkable thing. In that window. 95%.

Of all the least reached peoples. Live. So globally speaking.

Lost peoples. Are poor peoples. It's not an absolute.

It's just. Almost absolute. The big blocks of the unreached.

Are the big blocks of the poor. Therefore to talk about. Gospel to the nations and generosity the poor are to talk about one thing.

So when we're talking about summoning you to. Cross a culture. To do missions.

If your heart is set on the least reached. It will it will almost certainly be. Poor.

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