

Theology of Missions

by Nigel Paul

Nigel Paul's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's story and the role of prayer in missions for His glory.

Duration: 26:05

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Missions", "The Power of Prayer"

Description

Nigel Paul emphasizes the importance of understanding the theology of missions, reminding us that it is ultimately God's story, not ours. He highlights that we are called to missions not out of pity for the lost, but for God's glory and love, as we share the message of redemption with those who are lost like we once were. Paul stresses the necessity of prayer in missions, asserting that it is the most powerful tool we have to effect change and fulfill the Great Commission. He encourages the congregation to engage in intercessory prayer, which can lead to spiritual renewal and transformation both personally and in the church. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to pray and seek God's guidance in participating in His mission.

Transcript

You know, we've been in meetings for 7 hours and 45 minutes. And we still have one sermon to go. Are we in Africa or Canada here? Wow, and you know what's the most encouraging? When I was here as a younger person, as a teenager, we used to sit in that row back there and most of us were making noise and doing all kinds of things.

And I'm encouraged by these young dudes here. So I just pray that the Lord will have a message for us and that we'll be able to stay awake, including myself, especially myself, and that we would have some capacity left in our hearts and minds because we have absorbed, hopefully, a lot today. Let's open in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, I thank you that we can be here. I thank you that we can listen to reports of what you're doing around the world firsthand. I thank you that we can be part of it.

And I pray now that you will equip me to speak. And I pray that if our brains are full, that you would speak to our spirits. And Lord, I ask a big thing and that is that this message would be eternal so that some in this room would be changed, including myself, that we might know your will and obey and have a meaningful

life.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. As generations come and go and are forgotten, God remains.

This is his story. Eternity is his story. He is the great I am.

As we are to be God-centered, so he is God-centered, perfectly communing with himself. This is his story. Psalm 29 and Revelation 4, he is the one who sits on the throne.

His is the appearance of Jasper and Carnelian. His glory encircles him. The voice of the Lord is over the waters.

The God of glory thunders. The Lord thunders over the mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful and majestic.

It breaks the cedars. It strikes with flashes of lightning. It shakes the desert of Kadesh.

It twists the oaks and strips the forest bare. The Lord sits enthroned over the flood. He is enthroned as king forever.

In his temple all cry glory. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen. Worship him, the focal point of eternity, the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the author and finisher.

This is his story. It is a mystery, but God chose to bring something other than himself into his story. He created us.

We were imperfect, indeed far worse, yet Ephesians 2 tells us that he is incomplete without the redeemed church. It says that with Christ as our head, we are his body. The last verse of this chapter describes us as the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

We are sharers in the eternal inheritance as God's children and we are an inheritance to God. Because God decided so, we are important. And because he decided we would be, we are part of his story.

But no glory is to go to us. We do not deserve to be important. We deserve nothing.

No, we do deserve something. We deserve help. We deserve eternal damnation.

We deserve unending suffering because without the blood of the lamb, we are, in the words of the great revivalist Paris Readhead, monsters of iniquity. We are selfish, godless, despicable lovers of sin. As Christ's disciple, we betrayed him.

As his friend, we denied him three times. As his inner circle, we abandoned him. As his family, we didn't believe in him.

As the townsfolk, we praised him with Hosanna and then screamed for his death. As the authority, we handed him over and washed our hands of it. As the soldiers, we flogged him and gambled for his clothes.

As religious priests, we mocked him while he hung on the cross. As his followers, we lost all hope when he died. But Christ went through with his plan.

His eternal story would go on. He endured the agony of the cross and the pain and suffering and isolation he experienced is something we may never understand and something we don't understand at all when we don't understand our depravity without him. Why did he do it? He went through with it because of his love for his own triune nature to bring glory to himself and because of his indescribable love for us.

He rose again. He conquered death. And it would take nothing less to redeem the despicable sinners we are.

We must remember this when we consider missions. We do not go because we feel sorry for the people. We do not go because they deserve the chance to be saved.

We do not go because they have not yet heard and it's not their fault. No, we go to people who were like us, hateful God-scorners, unsaved. We loved our sin.

We lived for our sin. We lived for ourselves. We saw consequences but did it anyway.

We saw his creation but explained it away. He placed eternity in our hearts but we ignored it. God calls us to missions for the same reason he died on the cross.

He died for his own glory and for his love for us. We go for his glory and to share his love with sinners who will become saints, disciples, and fellow worshippers who will be like us, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. When we participate in missions, we must know why we go.

We must remember that this is God's story. It's not about us. It's not about them.

It's about him. We go for his glory, for his unending renown. As well as going for the right motives, we must go in the right way.

This is sobering because unless we go his way in his will, we go in our way, and our way leads to death. Let us take the warning from the church of Sardis in the book of Revelation. To the angel of the church in Sardis write, These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your deeds. You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up.

Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard. Obey it and repent.

Here is a church that has a reputation of being alive. What might give Sardis the reputation of being alive? Perhaps high and growing attendance, perhaps a well-administered setup of services and programs, perhaps zeal among the people. Others are saying, Look at Sardis.

Now they have their act together. But the frightening thing is that this church is so asleep, Christ calls it dead. There are many messages we can personally apply from this passage, but let us focus today on this.

We need to know his way for his story. Our way leads to destruction. His way leads to his glory.

We have been presented today with a challenge of missions. We know we need to respond. We want to respond.

We recognize that missions, the spread of the message of Christ around the world, is for God's glory, and that it's all part of God's story. We recognize that we need to do it his way. So the big question remains, what should we do? What is the first thing we should do? Surely the response is go.

It's the Great Commission. If the word stays not in the Great Commission, then surely we have no alternative. Go into Jerusalem.

Go into Judea. Go into Samaria. Go to the ends of the earth.

Go and preach the gospel. Go and baptize new believers. Go and make disciples.

Go. Go. Go.

Surely this is the first thing we should do. Right? Wrong. Let us notice the very first words of Christ in the action-packed book of Acts.

They are, do not go. It says, do not leave Jerusalem until. Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Christ has given his disciples the Great Commission, and they are raring to go. Yes, go, he is saying, but do not go without my spirit.

I need to be with you. I need to be communing with you. Matthew 9. Seeing the people, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited, like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. What Jesus says next is his action plan for us. What he says next is the answer to the question, what is the first thing we should do? What does he say? Does he say, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, so go right away? Or go find workers? Or motivate people to go? No, he doesn't.

Here is what he said. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray.

Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Pray. If we pray, workers will go to the harvest.

If we pray, the right workers will go to the harvest. If we pray, you and I will be able to share that much more in God's story personally in our local churches and in missions. In his book, *The Work God Blesses*, Oswald J. Smith wrote the following.

Intercessory prayer is the Christian's most effective weapon. Nothing can withstand its power. It will do things when all else has failed, and the marvel is that we turn to other agencies in order to accomplish what only prayer can bring to pass.

God has placed this mighty weapon in our hands, and he expects us to use it. How disappointed he must be when we lay it aside and substitute natural means for supernatural work. He continues, in this 20th century, we are more and more turning from the God-appointed means of intercessory prayer and

adopting instead merely natural agencies for the carrying on of his work.

Everywhere we look, it is the same, both in evangelism and ordinary church work. Intercessory prayer has been shelved. For some reason, it is out of date.

Our methods, we say, are better, our plans more successful, and so we adopt natural means to bring to pass the supernatural. He says, my brethren, it can never be done. We may appear to be successful, the crowds may come, the altar may be full night after night, reported results may be broadcasted everywhere, whole cities may be stirred and mightily moved, and yet when it is all over and two or three years have passed, how little will be found to be genuine.

And why? Simply because we have been satisfied with a superficial, spectacular work brought to pass by natural means. Consequently, the truly supernatural has been largely lacking. Oh, let us go back to intercessory prayer, the highest form of Christian service, and give God no rest until we have a spiritual outcome, end of quote.

Prayer. If we do it, we will remember more, we will care more, we will give more, we will commune with God more, we will be more sensitive to his spirit in our lives. We will take time out, we will be able to be still and know that he is God.

We will have deeper fellowship with one another. God will work. He will change things.

He will be released to do things. He will give us himself. People will get saved.

We will grow in our faith. We will get filled. We will not slip into complacency.

Our vision will be renewed. We will commune with a triune God. Our faith will grow.

Our loaves and fish will be multiplied. Our marriages will be stronger. Our churches will be united.

Battles will be won in the spiritual realms. And great things will happen in missions. For those who have prayed, God has already fulfilled his promise.

If our eyes were opened, as Ephesians 2 yearns for, to what he has done and is doing around the world, we would be different people. Unprecedented numbers of people are turning to Christ in Africa, Asia, and South America. Churches and countries where Christians are or have been severely persecuted, like Ethiopia, China, Korea, and India, have been strengthened and refined.

South Korea has overtaken the UK as the second largest sending nation after the USA. And India is not far behind. The Bible has been translated into over 380 languages.

The New Testament is available in close to 1,000 and is available to 94% of the world in their mother tongue. Christian radio broadcasts blanket 99% of the world in 115 languages. The Jesus film has been viewed by about 3 billion people and has yielded over 128 million inquiries.

Well over 99% of the world can view the film in a language they know. In China, where 100 years ago there was just a handful of believers, now, even by conservative estimates, 30,000 are coming to the Lord every day. Not only that, but China is becoming a sending nation, training and equipping believers to spread the gospel in surrounding Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu countries united in a vision to take the gospel back to Jerusalem.

God is doing amazing things. But how is it possible? The entire budget needed each year to support foreign missionaries is smaller than the amount of money Americans spend on dog food each year. And there are only about 250,000 missionaries worldwide.

That means there is only one missionary couple for every 50,000 people. This is a small army. But this Gideon-sized army is God's army and he would have it no other way.

What will God do in our generation? Though it never seemed possible, both Africa and China have seen millions come to Christ. Might God do something similar in the seemingly unshakable empire of Islam? Through the intercessory prayers of the saints, might the mighty walls crumble and fall? Might we see tens of thousands coming to Christ in the Muslim world in our generation? Perhaps if we pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray together. Let's pray on our knees at home. Let's sit down, take time out, and pray.

I find if I don't pray before I check my email, it's a lost cause for the day. Let's pray throughout the day. Let's pray through the prayer letters our missionaries write.

I would really encourage you to subscribe by email to MSC's weekly missionary updates. I just started recently and I realize these are real people. This is well put together and it helps me to pray for people we are the most connected to, assembly commended workers all around the world.

msc.on.ca Sign up by email. Let's read books like Operation World. This may be one of the single most powerful pieces of equipment on earth.

It has vital information. It has in-depth, accurate statistics about not only economics and populations and things like that, but what the Lord is doing and what the prayer requests are. Let's look at Operation World.

My brother is a lot more faithful than me, but let's look at the missionary prayer handbook and look at these people, a lot of whom we know, a lot of whom a third have been sent from Canada. Let's pray through this book. Let's read Missions Magazine.

Stories, they've put a lot of effort into it. Let's pray. Let's use this to pray.

Let's read books that help us to pray and magazines. Let's find out what God is doing around the world. When we meet new missionaries, let's ask to be added to their prayer lists.

Let us pray. And as we pray, may we even be listening enough to hear His voice if He decides to send me or to send you. Praise God for what He is doing in missions.

This is His story. He is the one who sits on the throne. His glory encircles Him.

Ascribe to the Lord. The glory do His name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness.

Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength. Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

Worship Him. The focal point of eternity. The beginning and the end.

The Alpha and the Omega. The first and the last. The author and finisher.

Because this is His story. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I thank You that for whatever reason You have allowed us to be part of Your story.

And Lord, I thank You that it is Your story. I thank You that it's not our story. I thank You that You are God and that we are not.

I thank You that only Your way works. Lord, I guess I ask that each of us would look at our own lives and ask You to teach us to pray. Because not only will this transform missions and not only can we work in other parts of the world while being here through prayer, but it will transform us personally.

It's Your solution for us personally and it's Your solution for the local church. It's Your solution for relationships. It's Your solution for everything under the sun.

Lord, help us to pray and thank You that we can pray in freedom. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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