

The Bible Is a Missionary Book

by Paris Reidhead

The Bible is a missionary book that calls the Church to be a missionary society, and every believer to be part of the family business of spreading the message of God's love.

Duration: 32:44

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Bible"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for better vision in the church and among believers. He highlights three cardinal principles: the Bible is a missionary book, the Church is a missionary society, and believers have the responsibility to carry the message of Jesus Christ. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of understanding the plight of a condemned sinner and the plan of a compassionate savior. He explains that Jesus, though fully divine, relinquished the right to act in his deity and carried out his ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit. The speaker concludes by sharing a personal anecdote about seeing a sign in a store window asking, 'Do you need better vision?' and relates it to the need for spiritual vision in the church.

Transcript

...basic principles, and I repeat them for their sake and for yours who were not with us. There are three principles that I hold to be cardinal, basic, foundational, and so important that I'd hope you'd write them down if you do not have them as yet. The first is this.

The Bible is a missionary book. It is the unfolding of the eternal purpose in the heart of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to bring to Himself a people who could be the object of His love. It involved the Lord Jesus Christ becoming a foreign missionary, leaving His Father's home and coming into this world and identifying with us and then dying for us, and giving to those who believed on Him the responsibility to carry that message.

The Bible is a missionary book, first principle. Second is this. The Church, rightly understood, is a missionary society.

I don't care if it has one or not, if it is one. If it has a missionary society and isn't a missionary society, it's missed the point. If it is a missionary society, then it can have as many as it wants because it's the expression of the life of the Church.

What we call missionary societies ought to view themselves as missionary service agencies, not usurping the authority of the local church and eldership, to whom the Spirit of God spoke at Antioch saying, Separate unto me and send. It's the responsibility of the local church. And the third principle is this.

Everyone born into the Father's family is expected to become part of the family business. And the business of the Godhead is to get the message of God's grace and love in Christ out to those for whom He died. Now, if you will receive those three principles, you're going to find that you have put under your thinking and your living foundations that will stand sure and keep you from shaking in the years to come.

In this missionary book, in Proverbs, the 29th chapter, the 18th verse, we read, Where there is no vision, the people perish. I have thought a great deal about that, and I'm not yet quite sure whether that means that the people of God who don't have a vision are going to be wasted or the people who are not seen in the vision are going to perish. I'd rather think it may be both.

Years ago in Chattanooga, Tennessee, while I was still deputation secretary for the Sudan Interior Mission, I was asked to speak at the annual missionary conference of one of the large churches in Chattanooga. I had a message that I'd prepared but wasn't the least satisfied with. I was ready to go, but I wasn't happy at what was the preparation that was made.

I had went to my study and was praying about it. I knelt at the desk, and I had a piece of paper and a pencil there. And while I was praying, I recalled what I'd seen that afternoon on one of the stores in Chattanooga.

It was a store that sells eyeglasses. I guess you'd call it an optician shop. And they had a very striking window.

It was cardboard backdrop of a doctor's office. And in the picture was a cutout of a professional-looking man with that little mirror with the hole in the center that they use for looking into your eyes. The doctor had his foot up on the chair and his elbow on his knee, and his finger was pointed in such a way that anyone who got in front of that window would feel as though the eyes of the doctor were piercing his.

And in the little balloon that you generally associate with the conversation were these words. Do you need better vision? Well, I hadn't paid too much attention to it. I did realize this, that blind people weren't going to be impressed with the picture.

So you had to have some vision, or you couldn't get the message. And as I was praying there, I felt those words burning into my mind and heart. Do you need better vision? Does the church at which I am to speak tonight need better vision? Do believers everywhere need better vision? We've had some vision, but what about better vision? And so as I was there, I prayed, Lord, if there's a message in this for me and for those to whom I'll be speaking, guide my mind.

And in the next 15 minutes, I wrote down four phrases that I want to share with you this morning. The first that I wrote on that paper was this. We need to see, better than we've ever seen before, the plight of a condemned sinner.

And I was thinking particularly of those around the world that had never heard the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the year in which I saw that was 1950. That was quite a few years ago.

At that time, there were many in the world that had never heard the name of Christ. There are twice as many today that have never heard the name of Christ than there were 37 years ago. So we've got a lot of constituents and potential clients out there, people for whom the Lord Jesus died that are dead in their trespasses and sins.

We need to see the plight of the condemned sinner. Oh, you've heard people say, I think that God, this God of love and mercy, he's going to let these poor ignorant heathen that never heard about sin, don't know anything about God. He'll find a way for them.

The only trouble with that is that it indicates enormous ignorance about the people that live in so-called heathen darkness. I was surprised when I got to the Sudan how much they knew that my professors in missiology had never suggested they knew. For instance, I went into one tribe and spent some time with them, and I found out that they knew the name of God.

I didn't know that, that they'd have a name of God. And they knew, in contrast, the name of Satan. And they knew that God had made the world.

And they knew that God was good. And they knew that God was angry with them because they were bad. And they knew what bad was.

Well, I pressed them a little, and I found out they knew that it was bad to lie and bad to steal. And it was bad to kill. And it was bad to commit adultery.

They knew all of that, and they'd never seen a missionary. They'd never heard the name of Christ. I was the first one ever to come to them with the Bible and with the name of our Lord.

Yet they knew this. And I asked them how they knew. How do you know it's bad to lie and steal and kill? And they said, our stomachs tell us.

Doesn't your stomach tell you that? Well, you see, you don't wonder at that. We would say our hearts tell us. The seed of personality in our culture and in most cultures that come from a Greek background, the heart is the seed of personality.

I know in one tribe in Africa, when they translated that verse, be not afraid, it is I, it came out, don't get a shiver in your liver, it's only me. Because the seed of personality was in the liver, not even in the stomach. They said, our stomachs tell us.

I found out they knew the name of Satan. They knew that Satan was bad, he was cruel. They knew that there were evil spirits and that they knew the names of the spirits around them that harassed them, that killed their goats if they weren't appeased, that caused their crops to fail, their children to get sick.

So they took their chickens and their goats as the witch doctor was instructed and sacrificed them to the evil spirits. I asked why they didn't do it to God. And they said, we don't even know that God, this one Wanamish, they called him, we don't even know that he wants chickens.

We can't waste chickens on him when we've got to give all so many to the evil spirit. You see, it's not to be wondered at, is it? In Romans, the second chapter, you read, when the pagans who have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written on their hearts. Charles Finney, 140 years ago, wrote a splendid sermon

entitled The Inner Revelation and The Outer Revelation.

In it he said, everyone born of human parents and possessing human life has the law of God written upon their hearts, upon their conscience. It is part of the equipment with which God brought men into the world, the light that lights every man that comes into the world. And he proceeded to say that you can go anywhere in the world where there are human beings and preach the word, and to Finney, preaching the word meant preaching the law, for by the law is the knowledge of sin, and the law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

And he said, the structure is this. God has put the law in the heart, and he's put it in the word. Think of it as millstones.

The lower millstone is the law written on the heart. The upper millstone is the law written in the word. And the human spirit, which has been here riding around on the lower millstone without any real discomfort, now as the upper millstone of the truth of God's righteousness and holiness in the law is pressed down, the human spirit is caught between the upper millstone and the lower millstone, and the spirit is prepared for grace.

It's like wheat ground exceeding small. Thus the law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, because the law is written on the heart. Now what I found among the people who had the law written on their heart but had not yet encountered the law from the word, they were about to but they hadn't, was this.

They knew God, that he was holy, that he was righteous, and he was just and just, but they had no fear of God. And I said, why do you, I asked him, do you steal? Oh, yes, yes. Do you lie? Oh, sure.

Do you kill? And one of them looked at me and said, are you with the government? I said, no. He said, I kill. And so do these.

Why do you do it? They looked at each other, because we want to. Why else? We chose to. It's what we like.

That's why we do it. It's our choice. No fear of God before their eyes.

Rebels against the knowledge of God they have. Traitors against the government of God that they see about them, for the whole world testifies to his governorship. I picked up a stick, who made it, gave me the name Ornish.

It was his, testified to him. But they were betraying his government, rebelling against what they knew of him. Anarchists, choosing how to please themselves without regard for the interests of others, the rights of others.

And transgressors of that law written on the heart. And enemies of God, because the carnal mind is enmity against God. It's not subject to the law of God.

Now, that's a condition of the sinner. Dead in trespasses and sins. Without God, without hope.

Alienated from the life of God through the darkness that is in them. We've got to understand that. We've got to see that.

It was a shock to me. I remember one occasion I was tired. I'd had malaria.

I was weary. I was fed up with Africa clear up over my head. I saw an airplane go by and I just wished there was a ladder I could grab it and leave.

I'd have been happy to. And I remember getting down in my bedroom alone and closing the door and shutting out the world and talking to God in honest, open terms. You know, I found it doesn't pay to try to mealy-mouth God.

Did you know that? It doesn't pay to try to con him. He looks on the heart. And if it's there, you better get it on.

And I remember saying, praying something like, Lord, I've been fed a bill of goods. I thought these were poor, ignorant heathens standing at the edge of the path waiting for me to come along to tell them how to go to heaven. They aren't interested in any more interested in going to heaven or in learning about you than the sinners in Indiana were where I was before I came here.

These are monsters of iniquity. They deserve hell. They deserve your wrath.

And when I got quiet enough and finished, it seemed to me I heard his voice in my mind and heart saying, of course. Of course they're sinners. They're traitors.

They're rebels. They're dead in their sins. They deserve my anger.

They deserve my wrath. Why, they're just as bad as you were. When you deserve my wrath, my anger.

They don't deserve grace any more than you did. But someone loved you and someone prayed for you and someone witnessed to you. And you came to me.

Now I didn't send you out here because they deserve you or me. I sent you out here because I deserve the reward of my suffering. I loved them.

I died for them. You're not here for the sinner. You're here for me.

And I want you to know that that day changed my ministry. Up till then I'd been trying to rescue sinners from the hands of an angry God and didn't think it was right for them to go out of life without one chance to be saved. And from that moment on, I knew they deserved wrath.

And instead of that, I was there representing a gracious, loving Savior who was waiting for sinners through intercession and witness to be lifted into his outstretched arms that they, in faith, might be partakers of his life. Changed everything. We need to understand the plight of a condemned sinner.

I wrote something else on that paper that night, that afternoon before I went to the service. The next thing was this. We need to see better than we've ever seen before the plan of a compassionate Savior.

Now God loved the world and sent his Son. The Son loved the world and shed his blood and poured out his life. And now it's the task of the church to get that message out to those for whom he died.

Now what was his plan? Well, it was simple. You see, he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead bodily, but at the beginning of his public ministry there at Jordan, he presented his body to the Father and relinquished the right, from that time on, to act in his essential deity as Son. He didn't relinquish his deity, but the right to act in his deity.

And he presented his body to the Father, accepting the limitation of his humanity, and everything done by our Lord Jesus Christ in the three years of his public ministry was done by the Father through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. It was not done by the Lord. He said, I don't do anything of myself.

I don't speak of myself. The works that I do, the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. I only do what I see the Father do.

Why? So that he could say, as the Father sent me, so send I you. What was his plan? Everyone redeemed by his blood would count it their reasonable service to present their bodies as living sacrifices, so that the Lord Jesus could live in us the way the Father lived in him, and we would live in him the way he lived in the Father. And he said in John 17, if that happens, the world will know and the world will be able to believe.

Now we've done everything else. We've concocted every other kind of plan and scheme. The only thing we failed to do is to let the Lord Jesus carry out his plan.

I think it's high time we did. And that plan is this, that you recognize that you can no more live the Christian life by and through your own efforts than you can save yourself by and through your own efforts. And if you couldn't earn by your efforts enough merit to atone for your sins and had to trust his finished work, then you're going to count it your reasonable service to present your body to him.

You're going to present your brain so that living in you he can use your brain to think his thoughts. You're going to present your eyes so that living in you he can use your eyes to see men as sheep scattered without a shepherd. You're going to present your ears so that living in you he can hear the cry of those that are seeking to be taken from the briars of sin that hold them fast.

You're going to present your feet so that living in you he can use your feet to go where he would. You're going to present your hands so that living in you he can use your hands to lift the fallen, guide the blind to light, and feed the hungry. You're going to present your heart so that living in you he can have a heart to be broken with compassion for a lost world.

You're going to present your lips so that living in you he can use your lips to speak his word of redeeming, reconciling love to those that would be saved. You're going to present your body to him. That's his plan, that you're going to have no plans of your own.

You're going to relinquish the right to originate and to invent, and you're going to be utterly committed to him. The call he gave you was to follow him. And once you've said my Jesus to Jesus my Lord, you never can use the word my in a proprietary sense again.

His plan was that everyone redeemed by his blood would have as their highest objective for their life being available to the Lord Jesus to get this message of his dying love out to those who haven't heard. We need to see the plan of a compassionate Savior. The third thing I wrote down on that paper was this.

We need to see better than we've ever seen before the plot of a crafty serpent. Now we know what the Word says. The God of this world is done to the lost, to the heathen.

We are told that if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost. The God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. We know that it's as though there's a hangman's hood over every sinner, and though the light be shining about

it doesn't pierce that hood until in intercession we have lifted it, and we have the power, the authority given to us in our risen Lord to exercise his victory and remove that hood and let the light may enter.

We don't have control over people, but we have been given authority over principalities and powers if used wisely and judiciously by his body. But we are not talking about that when we're talking about the plot of a crafty serpent. We know that the purpose of God is going to be fulfilled from the people of God, the people that know him and that love him, that have been washed in his blood and begotten of his spirit.

But these are the ones that often are victims of the plot of the serpent. I think of one man that I met years ago in Michigan. I'd been speaking to a church on this same theme, and he came to me afterwards and he said, Brother, I want you to know that you're looking at one of the most unhappy, miserable failures in life.

No, financially I'm all right. I've been able to raise and care for my family, but I've failed as a person. And he said, I want to tell you my story, if you have a few moments, and I did.

He said, I grew up here in Michigan, not far away. My father had a good farm, and he wanted me to succeed him as farmer, but I felt the Lord leading me to his service, and particularly to the mission field, and particularly to Africa. I'd gone to Moody Bible Institute to prepare to be a missionary.

It was between my next to the last in my last year. That summer I was home working on the farm, feeling it would be the last year I could be there. We came to the week before I was to leave to go back to Moody, finish the last year and graduate and go on into the service I believe the Lord is leading me to.

He said, one day my father came to me, and very serious, and he said, come, let's get away. I don't want your mother to hear what I'm saying. He said, we walked out behind the barn, against the fence post.

My father looked at me and put his hands on my shoulder, and he started to cry. He said, everything I have, I have gotten for you. My whole thought and plan has been that you should take this farm, and you should use it, and it's yours, and I want you to have it.

And now you're going to the mission field. And he said, I don't want you to go. I don't believe it's fair of God to ask you, my only child, to go, and I want you to stay.

I want you to stay and take the farm and work with me and have it. And he said, he started to sob. He put his arms around my neck and shoulders.

My father laid his head down on my shoulders, and he sobbed. His shoulders just shook with the pain that he felt that I was going to leave him and go to the mission field. I could only stand so much of it.

I'd never seen my father so broken before. And someplace in this, while it was happening, I put, raised my hand behind my father's head in the face of God. And in myself, not out loud, I said, God, it's too much.

I can't take it. I'm not going. Regardless of whether I believe you want me to go or this is your will, I will stay with my father.

I took my hand down and said, Father, I'll stay. I knew it was wrong, but I did it. Said in less than three years, my father was dead and two more.

My mother was dead and three more. I'd lost the farm. I had no heart to manage it.

I'd mismanaged it. He said, I've been working in one job after another ever since. I've made a living for myself and my family.

But he looked at me, he said, I'm the most miserable person you'll ever meet. Oh, God's forgiven me. I know that if I die, I'll go to be with him.

I've been born of him. I have the witness of his spirit. But I've wasted my life.

What had happened? That father and that son had been caught up in the net woven by that crafty serpent. And oh, how many parents there are that weave ambitions for their children. This is not the only time or occasion when I've had such a story told to me.

And how imperative it is that we should recognize fathers and mothers when those children are born or when we're born again if they were born before we were born into his family. Lord, they're thine. Use them as and where and when you will.

They're thine. We cannot fall into the trap of that crafty serpent who would weave a net to keep those whom God would use from that place of service that he would choose. And then there are others that have nets woven with business aspirations that exceed their abilities.

They have aspirations to possess that which others have but would not be befitting to them. Unwise use of funds and opportunities and there's a dissipation of the resources that he could use to send the gospel to the ends of the earth. Oh, how important it is for businessmen and their families to make a commitment to the Lord and set an upper limit to their lifestyle and that everything beyond that is going to be used to get the gospel out to the ends of the earth.

God is looking for people he can trust, looking for people he can bless, but so many have that net woven around them by this crafty serpent who would insinuate himself among the people of God and would stand in the way of the Lord, the head of the church, having his free way in the lives of those he's redeemed. Now we have to have better vision than we've ever had before of the plot of a crafty serpent. But there was one other phrase that was down on that paper before I arose that night.

We need to see better than we've ever seen before the place of a consecrated service. What does it mean to make a commitment to Christ? What do I have to do? Well, the call of the Lord to everyone is come, follow me. I got into trouble up at Park Street Church in Boston with one lady.

I was telling her that the Greek, in that verse that we read, go into all the world and preach the gospel, actually is as you are going into all the world, preach the gospel. The first, there isn't a go in the imperative there. Why? Well, it would be strange for our Lord to say follow me and then turn around and say go.

No, he said you follow me. And as you are going into all the world, preach the gospel. The imperative is in preach, not going.

You don't have to go any further than he leads. And you dare not stop any sooner than he leads. For your commitment is to follow him.

Come, follow me.

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