

하나님의 영광을 바라보는 선교사



개혁신앙 안에서
선교를 고민하는 이들을 위한 묵상

최용진 선교사



GOD-PLEASING BOOKS

A Missionary Who Beholds the Glory of God

Meditations for Those Reflecting on Mission
within the Reformed Faith

Yongjin Choi

Notice to Readers

This book was written by a Korean missionary, and this English edition was translated from the original Korean using artificial intelligence (AI) technology. Accordingly, many parts of the book reflect not only the experiences and perspective of its Korean author, but also the background of the Korean church and Korean culture.

Readers are therefore encouraged to keep this background in mind rather than interpret every event or example as referring directly to the Thai church or Thai society.

Nevertheless, the biblical principles and reflections on mission presented in this book are intended to invite Christians from every cultural background to reflect together on life and ministry for the glory of God.

Foreword

The author's many years of wrestling, study, and reflection permeate every page and every meditation in this book. The subjects addressed in these twenty-six meditations are anything but light. They go beyond the identity of the missionary and the essence of mission to address the identity of the believer and the essence of faith itself.

Drawing on the language of the mission field, this book ranges from practical subjects such as a missionary's family life to central themes of Reformed theology such as the cross, justification and repentance, and limited atonement. In doing so, it leads readers away from visible fruit and results and toward unseen roots and realities. The author's longing for the restoration of God-centered mission fills the book. Readers will benefit more from taking one chapter a day than from rushing through it from beginning to end.

As I read, I became increasingly convinced that this book should be placed not only in the hands of missionaries in the field and those preparing to begin missionary service, but also in the hands of pastors, candidates for pastoral ministry, and all believers who long for the glory of God.

Hyungik Kim
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Senior Pastor of Beth Shalom Church)

Preface

Asking Again What Mission Is

When we speak of mission, we naturally look outward first. We think of people who have not yet heard the gospel, countries that must be opened, and churches that need to be established. Yet as time passes, one question remains with increasing force.

Where does mission truly begin?

Scripture speaks clearly. Mission always begins with God. And this God first deals with the missionary. Before transforming the mission field, he touches the missionary's heart. The most important place in mission, therefore, is not the field but the place before God.

While serving on the mission field, I have often encountered a painful reality. The commissioning pledge of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (HapDong) includes a clear confession that a GMS missionary will "uphold the Reformed faith." Yet in actual ministry settings, I often find that there is not a sufficiently deep understanding of what this Reformed faith is or what it means for mission and ministry.

This is not a book intended to expound Reformed theology or missiology. Rather, it is an attempt to share thoughts I came to wrestle with and hold fast to on the mission field, grounded in that theology. I found myself asking not what a missionary accomplishes, but what a missionary holds fast to and stands upon.

We are easily shaken as we serve in the field. We grow discouraged when we see no fruit and become disheartened when comparing our ministry with others. At times, the better the ministry seems to go, the more quietly its center shifts. Then, at some point, we discover that although we preach the gospel, we are not living by the gospel.

This book is written primarily for those preparing for mission or just beginning their ministry. Yet it is also offered to believers who serve the church, the body of Christ, and live with the Lord's Great Commission in their hearts.

Rather than presenting definitive answers, these reflections began with a desire to think together about mission that looks to the glory of God. I wanted to reconsider quietly what it means to place the center of mission once again upon the gospel, the standard of ministry once again in God, and the roots of life once again in family and godliness.

Whoever reads these words, I hope that each person will stand before one question.

What am I holding on to as I live today?

And before that question, I pray that each reader may experience the grace of holding fast to God once again.

Finally, I offer my love and gratitude to my wife, missionary Sunhee Kim, who has remained beside me with an unwavering love for the Lord, and to our three beloved daughters, who have trusted their mother and father and walked with us without complaint.

I also thank the members of every church who have believed in and supported our mission work in Thailand and have always prayed for us. I am especially grateful to our co-sending churches: Beth Shalom Church and Pastor Hyungik Kim, God-Pleasing Church and Pastor Deukan Jeon, and Muldaen Dongsan Church and Pastor Gyeongcheol Yeom.

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Yongjin Choi, Missionary

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PART 1

The Missionary's Identity

What Does a Missionary Hold Fast To?

"rightly handling the word of truth"

(2 Timothy 2:15, ESV)



CHAPTER 1

Truth War

The Fiercest Battle on the Mission Field

"Apostate false teachers who remain in the church and undermine true faith are often extremely subtle, but they are never harmless. Heresy always breeds more evil."

- John MacArthur, The Truth War

The fiercest battles on the mission field do not always take place where they can be seen. Language barriers, cultural differences, religious opposition, and financial hardship are certainly real problems. Yet there is a more fundamental battle: whether we will believe God's Word as truth and proclaim the gospel in accordance with that Word.

A missionary is someone sent to a foreign land. He must learn a new language, understand a different culture, and enter into people's lives. All of this matters. But what a missionary must hold fast to first is not a method, but the message. Strategies may change and forms may be adapted, but the Word entrusted by God cannot be changed.

Mission usually begins to lose its footing when the authority of Scripture grows unclear. When confidence that the Bible is the Word of God weakens, the gospel comes to be treated not as truth to be proclaimed, but as content to be adjusted to fit the situation. The missionary is then tempted to fashion a religious message that people will readily accept instead of proclaiming what God has spoken.

The gospel comforts people, but it does not exist merely to provide comfort. It embraces the broken, but it does not make light of sin. It proclaims the love of God, but that love does not exist apart from God's holiness and righteousness. A missionary may therefore communicate the gospel with kindness, but must never blur its essence.

Compromise with truth rarely begins with outright denial. We hear "We must speak differently in this age," "People may find that uncomfortable," or "We need a gentler approach" more often than we hear "The Bible is wrong." Wise language and cultural sensitivity are, of course, necessary. But once biblical teaching is blurred in the name of sensitivity, mission soon becomes more conscious of human reactions than of the Word of God.

As seemingly minor adjustments accumulate, the center of the message shifts. The gravity of sin is diminished, the call to repentance fades, and the reality of judgment goes unspoken. The cross is explained merely as a warm symbol of God's welcome rather than as the event of substitutionary

atonement. Christian language may still be used outwardly, while the message itself drifts far from the gospel revealed in Scripture.

A missionary must remain awake at this point. We cannot hide the truth in the name of loving people. If we value souls, we cannot tell them only what they want to hear. If sinners must stand before God, we must speak of sin and repentance. If Christ is the only Savior, we must make clear that there is no hope apart from the cross.

The field always presents many temptations: the desire to gather more people, to receive favorable evaluations, to avoid conflict, and to show supporters visible results. Such desires are not necessarily evil. But when they take priority over the Word, the missionary becomes an administrator rather than a witness.

A witness does not alter what he has been charged to testify. He does not reshape events into a version his listeners will prefer. His faithfulness lies not in creating a new message, but in faithfully communicating the word he has received. The same is true of a missionary. He is one who faithfully bears witness in his own time and setting to the Word he has received from the Lord.

This does not mean that a missionary may remain ignorant of culture. On the contrary, he must learn all the more diligently. He must learn the language, understand ways of thinking, and listen seriously to people's pain and questions. Yet all such learning is meant not to blur the gospel, but to communicate it more clearly. Cultural adaptation must serve the Word; it must never rule over it.

Holding fast to the truth does not end with stating correct doctrine. Those who believe the Word to be truth first place themselves under that Word. If a missionary uses Scripture merely as a tool to support his ministry, he has already begun to move away from its authority. The Word is not only the missionary's message; it is also the standard that governs his character and life.

When the gospel is distorted, mission retains only its name. It may become Christian-flavored activity, social work that uses religious

language, or a movement intended to enlighten people and society. But if the truth of the cross is not at its center, it can hardly be called the mission God has entrusted to us. The life of mission lies not in its scale or its programs, but in the purity of the Word proclaimed.

A missionary must therefore study God's Word deeply and often ask: Am I holding fast to God's Word now? Am I changing the message to accommodate people's responses? Am I avoiding the uncomfortable truths of Scripture in the name of staying sensitive to the times? These questions help a missionary examine his direction.

The fiercest battle on the mission field is ultimately the battle for truth. If we lose this battle, we may appear to gain much while losing the heart of mission. If, however, we hold fast to the Word, we will not change the message according to circumstances or responses. Before a missionary is someone who accomplishes something, he is someone who holds fast to something. His first loyalty must be to the Word of God, not to human expectations. Mission that does not surrender the truth - this is where all mission begins.

CHAPTER 2

A Missionary Is a Pastor

"A missionary is a messenger with a message from God, sent forth by divine authority for the definite purpose of evangelism, church-founding and church edification."

- George W. Peters, A Biblical Theology of Missions

A missionary's identity will differ according to how mission itself is understood. If mission is understood merely as preaching the gospel and gathering people, the missionary remains only an evangelist or church planter. But the mission revealed in Scripture goes deeper. The gospel not only calls people to Christ; it also builds them into a church under the Word.

A missionary, therefore, is not simply someone who preaches the gospel. He cares for those who have heard it so that they may grow within it. Conversion is not the end but the beginning. Once someone has heard and believed the gospel, that person must learn the Word, learn to worship, and learn the order of the church and the life of a believer. Without this process, there may be decisions, but it is difficult to establish a healthy church.

Establishing a church is not merely a matter of securing a building or organizing a gathering. The church is the people of God assembled under his Word. Establishing a church must therefore include shepherding: teaching the Word, helping people discern false teaching, supporting the weak, restoring those who fall, and caring for believers so that they may live as the body of Christ.

In this sense, a missionary has a pastoral identity. He is not someone who runs programs, but someone who cares for sheep. He does not mobilize people in order to produce ministry results; he feeds and nurtures with the Word the souls God has entrusted to him. Whatever the mission field and whatever the culture, the missionary's central calling is to present people mature in the truth.

Many mission strategies today emphasize rapid reproduction and early handover. Raising local leaders and helping the local church become self-supporting are essential. Danger arises, however, when handover itself becomes the goal. Simply transferring responsibility to a community whose foundation in the Word is still weak may amount not to biblical handover but to abandonment. Before a church can stand on its own, it must first be established on the truth.

A missionary should therefore seek not to establish local believers quickly, but to establish them rightly. Raising a leader does not simply mean assigning an office or role. It means preparing a person who understands the gospel clearly, teaches the Word correctly, loves the church, and is able to care for the flock. This takes time. It requires the patience to teach repeatedly and the love to wait.

Shepherding requires depth more than speed. A believer does not become mature simply by completing a course of instruction. People waver, misunderstand, and need to learn again. The missionary must therefore resist impatience. He must value the unseen growth taking place in the Word more highly than visible results.

To carry out this work, the missionary must first stand upon the Word himself. Language and cultural understanding are important, but they cannot replace depth in the Word. A missionary who is not deeply rooted in the truth cannot establish others upon the truth. A missionary who shepherds never stops learning. He studies the Word for himself and searches it more deeply for the sake of the believers entrusted to him.

Recognizing that a missionary is a pastor changes the way ministry is conducted. He does not see people as numbers. Behind the labels convert, attendee, volunteer, and local leader, he sees an individual soul. He therefore cares for people instead of using them. He does not drive them for the sake of results, but waits to grow together with them in the Word. This is the way of shepherding.

The Lord said to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17, ESV). This command is not only a standard for the pastoral calling; it must be remembered by everyone who labors to establish the church. A missionary preaches the gospel, establishes the church, and feeds the sheep until that church stands firmly upon the truth.

Handover is not the missionary's ultimate goal. It is fruit that follows when a church established by the Word is ready to assume responsibility. The missionary's first calling, therefore, is not to leave quickly. It is to establish upon the truth a church that will not collapse after he has gone.

CHAPTER 3

Faithfulness, Not Success

"The 'talents' ... represent not the natural gifts and aptitudes which everyone has, but the specific privileges and opportunities of the kingdom of heaven and the responsibilities they entail."

- R. T. France, "On Being Ready," in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*

The mission field often asks about fruit. How many people heard the gospel? How many attended worship? How many were baptized? How much has the church grown? These questions are not meaningless. But when fruit is understood only as visible ministry results, the missionary is easily crushed by the pressure to perform.

Scripture also speaks of fruit. Jesus said, "Every healthy tree bears good fruit" (Matthew 7:17, ESV), and in John 15 he said that his disciples would bear much fruit and so glorify the Father. A minister may therefore begin to assume, even without realizing it, that a good tree must necessarily produce large ministry results.

Yet the fruit in those passages is not primarily the "fruit of ministry." The fruit of a healthy tree is the fruit of life that reveals the life within the tree. The context of John 15 is the same. The Lord says, "Abide in me," then, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love," and commands, "love one another" (John 15:4, 10, 12, ESV). The fruit is first the life of a disciple who abides in Christ: the fruit of obedience, love, and holy character.

When this is overlooked, the promises of Scripture become a burden upon the minister. "You must bear much fruit" turns into the pressure to produce impressive results. The missionary's heart is then consumed with proving results rather than abiding in the Lord. But the Lord clearly identified the source of fruit: "I am the vine; you are the branches" (John 15:5, ESV). Fruit is not a result squeezed out by a branch through its own effort. It is evidence of life produced when the branch remains joined to Christ, the vine.

The fruit of ministry is, of course, precious. People who hear the gospel and are converted, believers who grow in the Word, and churches that are established are gifts for which we should thank God. Yet even these are not results a missionary can manufacture. We may proclaim the gospel, but we cannot open a person's heart. We may teach the Word, but God is the one who gives growth.

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 is not simply a comparison of ministry achievements. The third servant was cast into the outer darkness

not because he had produced too little ministry fruit. He did not trust his master. He failed to use in faith the privileges and opportunities entrusted to him, as R. T. France describes them, and instead hid them in the ground. His problem was not a small result, but unbelief and disobedience toward his master.

The servant who gained five talents and the servant who gained two received the same praise: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23, ESV). The amounts differed, but the master gave the same evaluation. What he saw was not performance measured against others, but faithfulness with what had been entrusted. The parable asks less, "How greatly did you succeed?" than, "Did you trust your master and remain faithful to what he entrusted to you?"

A missionary should therefore seek fruit, but before seeking the fruit of ministry, he must seek the fruit of his own life. He must first abide in the Lord, hold fast to the Word, stand in obedience, practice love, and examine whether the life of the gospel is being revealed within him. Before seeking results in ministry, he must ask whether he himself is a branch joined to Christ.

"Faithfulness, not success" is not an excuse for laziness. Faithfulness is serious obedience to what has been entrusted. A missionary must learn the language, study the Word, visit people, explain again, and wait patiently. Yet all this labor must be obedience that trusts the Lord, not a desperate struggle to force a particular result.

When fruit is misunderstood, the missionary collapses in one of two directions. He becomes proud when results are visible and despairs when they are not. He feels secure when people gather and questions all his labor when they leave. But we must remember this: the fruit belongs to God, while obedience has been entrusted to us.

Seasons in which ministry fruit appears slowly reveal the missionary's heart. Am I trying to prove myself through results, or am I abiding in the Lord and carrying out the obedience entrusted to me today? Am I crushed by the pressure to achieve much, or am I joyfully doing the work given to me while trusting the Lord who brings forth fruit?

A missionary holds fast to the gospel when ministry fruit is visible, and he holds fast to the gospel when no fruit can be seen. Because he knows that he is not the source of the fruit, he returns to obedience even in discouragement. The missionary who abides in Christ and does not avoid today's obedience is one who lives by faithfulness rather than success.

CHAPTER 4

Witness over Harmony

Suffering for the Gospel

*"The gospel of Jesus Christ is always offensive to the
natural man."*

- Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Not Ashamed of the Gospel"

A missionary enters into the life of the local community. He must learn its language and culture and build relationships with its people. It is important to maintain good relationships with local residents, cooperate with leaders when necessary, and serve practical needs. A missionary must not be rude; he must draw near to people's lives in order to proclaim the gospel.

Yet it is precisely here that a quiet temptation begins. The missionary may come to value harmony with the local community more highly than witness to the gospel. He does not want to create conflict. He wants to be remembered as a good person and recognized as a cooperative worker. Before long, mission may become centered on creating projects with people rather than bearing witness to the gospel.

Projects are highly visible. Educational programs, relief work, community events, facility repairs, and cooperative initiatives are easy to explain and report. Such work is certainly valuable. Yet the missionary must always ask: Is what I am doing serving the gospel, or is it taking the gospel's place? Has getting along well with people become a more important goal than bearing witness to Christ?

Jesus was not hated because he was unable to relate to the world. He welcomed sinners, healed the sick, and showed compassion to the lowly. At the same time, he exposed the evil of the world. He said, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil" (John 7:7, ESV). Love reaches out to the sinner, but truth does not leave sin untouched.

At this point the missionary must be prepared to suffer. Some will inevitably feel uncomfortable when sin and repentance are proclaimed. Some will certainly react with hostility when Christ is proclaimed as the only Savior. A clear proclamation of the cross as substitutionary atonement becomes a stumbling block to those who trust in human goodness. The discomfort and rejection that follow should not automatically be interpreted as a lack of wisdom or a failure of evangelistic strategy.

Paul was not always welcomed when he preached the gospel. In 2 Corinthians, he speaks of his ministry in terms of weakness and suffering rather than impressive achievement: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7, ESV). The treasure is the glory of the gospel revealed in Christ; the jar of clay is the frail minister entrusted with that gospel.

God does not allow the power of the gospel to appear as though it came from the strength of the minister. Instead, by working through weak people, he reveals that the power belongs to him. The missionary must therefore learn not to be ashamed of weakness. When relationships become strained and responses grow cold, he must not turn the gospel into safer religious language.

Not every difficulty, of course, is suffering for the gospel. Some conflicts arise from our immaturity, harshness, lack of wisdom, or unfaithfulness. In such cases, we must not dress up the hardship as something glorious. We must repent and learn. A missionary should not call every discomfort he experiences persecution.

But when rejection and misunderstanding come because the gospel has been faithfully proclaimed, the missionary must not weaken the truth in order to avoid them. Harmony is precious, but it cannot come before witness. Cooperation is necessary, but it cannot replace the gospel. The missionary's calling is not merely to create worthwhile projects, but to reveal Christ.

The Lord walked this road first. Jesus called sinners, but his purpose was to bring them to repentance: "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32, ESV). He forgave sin, but commanded the sinner to stop sinning: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8:11, ESV). He had compassion on the world, but testified to its evil. And that road led to the cross. To expect that someone who proclaims the gospel will be welcomed without suffering is to misunderstand the way of the cross.

A missionary is not someone searching for a road without suffering. He is someone who is not ashamed of the gospel even in suffering. He may be

misunderstood, rejected, or left lonely. Yet a missionary is one who does not weaken the gospel even there, who does not hate people, and who desires that Christ alone be exalted.

Suffering for the gospel is not failure. It may be a sign that the missionary is participating in the way of Christ. When he must choose witness over harmony, the missionary rediscovers who he is. He was not sent merely to be remembered as a good person, but to bear witness to the gospel of the cross.

CHAPTER 5

A Missionary Who Preaches the Gospel

but Fails to Live by It

"Only a fraction of the present body of professing Christians are solidly appropriating the justifying work of Christ in their lives."

- Richard F. Lovelace, Dynamics of Spiritual Life

A missionary is someone who proclaims the gospel. He announces that sinners stand before God not by their own works, but by the righteousness of Christ. He declares that they are saved by grace, justified through faith, and given a new standing in Christ. Yet on the mission field, the person who most easily forgets this gospel is sometimes the missionary himself.

His lips speak of grace, but his heart often returns to the language of worthiness. Am I doing well enough? Am I capable of carrying out this ministry? What do people think of me? Do my supporters consider my ministry meaningful? When such questions begin to rule the heart, the missionary unknowingly interprets himself not by the gospel, but by his ministry.

The gospel tells us to look to the righteousness of Christ, but our hearts often look to our own ability. We feel secure on a day when the sermon goes well and shrink back when the response is cold. We gain confidence when the language flows and feel small when words fail us. Praise brings the heart to life, while silence makes us feel worthless.

This problem is not simply the result of difficult ministry. Beneath it lies the deeper problem of self-righteousness. Even while preaching the gospel, we still want to prove our worth. At times, the desire to appear competent before others exerts more power than the truth that we already stand before God in the righteousness of Christ. Ministry then easily becomes not a response to grace, but a tool for validating our existence.

As Richard Lovelace observed, many Christians fail to appropriate firmly in their lives the justifying work of Christ. This is not only a problem for new believers. Missionaries face it as well. A missionary may be able to explain the doctrine of justification, yet fail to interpret his own weakness and failure through that doctrine. In his mind he says, I have been justified by grace, while in his heart he lives as though he must do better in order to possess value.

I too had to learn this on the mission field. I confess that I was saved by grace, yet at some point I had forgotten that becoming a missionary was also grace. I acted as though God had called me because I possessed certain abilities and qualifications. But the Lord did not call me because of

my competence or zeal. It was not because I was better or better prepared. Just as salvation was grace, calling was grace. Only after a long season of deep disappointment in myself and painful struggle did I begin to grasp this truth and humble myself a little more before the Lord.

This realization brings the missionary down from pride. Even when he feels that he knows a little more, teaches a little more, or has gone a little farther than others, the gospel says, "You too are someone who cannot stand without grace." A missionary is not a superior person who possesses the gospel, but a sinner who cannot stand for a single day without it. He was saved by grace, called by grace, and ministers by grace.

When this is forgotten, comparison rules the heart. Another missionary seems to learn the language more quickly. Someone else appears to connect with local people more naturally. One person has many stories to report, while another always seems confident. Comparison steals gratitude and makes our inadequacy appear greater than our calling.

The heart is also revealed when writing a missionary newsletter. Instead of sharing honestly, we want to appear more significant. We may want to inflate small accomplishments, minimize difficulties, and show only what looks good. It is certainly necessary to communicate ministry wisely to supporters. Yet the missionary must remain honest before God.

The same problem appears in relationships with local people. We feel hurt when people take our service for granted. Judgment rises quickly when someone we have taught walks away. Anger comes before love when a person repeatedly breaks a promise. At that moment, the missionary needs to hear again the gospel he has proclaimed. I too have lived by the patience of the Lord. I too cannot stand apart from his mercy.

Discouragement and pride may appear to be opposites, but they grow from the same root.

Pride says, "I have accomplished this much," while discouragement says, "I am nothing." Yet neither takes Christ as its standard. Both judge the self by its present condition rather than by the righteousness of the Lord. The

gospel rescues us from this instability. Our righteousness and standing do not depend on the condition of our ministry; they depend on Christ.

A missionary is not someone who becomes righteous through ministry. He is someone who already stands before God in the righteousness of Christ. Holding fast to this truth allows him to face failure honestly, because failure is no longer a verdict on his entire existence. It also allows him to remain humble before what he has done well, because it is not the ground of his righteousness but a gift of grace.

Living by the gospel does not mean making excuses for weakness. Rather, it leads to more honest repentance. A person who lives by self-righteousness tries to conceal failure, but a person who lives by the gospel can come into the light. Because Christ died for sinners, he can acknowledge his sin and weakness without falling into despair.

Before a missionary is someone who proclaims the gospel, he is someone who needs the gospel every day. When he does not forget this, his ministry ceases to be a stage for establishing his own righteousness and becomes a place where the grace of Christ is revealed.

CHAPTER 6

The Missionary's Deepest Driving Force

Delighting in God

*"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church.
Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."*

- John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad

What power sustains a missionary over the years? Where does the strength come from that keeps him from growing weary in a foreign land, raises him again amid repeated disappointment, and enables him to hold fast to the gospel in unseen places? Mission cannot be sustained by a moment of passion. Emotions cool with time, expectations are shaken, and people's responses may no longer be what they once were. A missionary therefore needs a deeper driving force.

Compassion for people is precious. Grief for souls who do not know the gospel, love for neighbors who suffer, and concern for those who are lost can all move a missionary. A sense of responsibility is also necessary. The missionary is one who has been called and who owes a debt to the gospel. Yet compassion and responsibility alone are not enough. Compassion can grow weary when people respond differently from what we expected, and over time responsibility can become a heavy obligation.

The missionary's deepest driving force comes from delighting in God. This means more than simply working for God. It means that God himself becomes the missionary's joy, comfort, and strength. When the Lord himself, rather than the results of ministry, becomes his satisfaction and joy, the missionary receives a deeper strength that does not collapse.

As John Piper has said, mission itself is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Mission exists because there are still people in this world who do not know the Lord, delight in him, or give him the glory he deserves. Mission is therefore not the work of making more people religious. It is the work of calling people who have lost God to become true worshipers in Christ.

Worship does not mean merely attending a public service. In Scripture, worship means recognizing God as supremely worthy, delighting in him, and glorifying him with the whole of life. Mission must therefore flow from the heart of a worshiper. A person who does not delight in the Lord cannot call others into true worship.

A missionary must first be someone who remains before God. Quietly opening the Word and spending time with the Lord is not merely an obligation of personal devotion. It is a time when the soul breathes again

and receives new strength. Listening to the Lord's Word where no one else can see, laying down one's heart, and taking hold of grace again keep the missionary's inner life healthy.

The busier ministry becomes, the more easily this time is pushed aside. There are always people to meet, gatherings to prepare, problems to solve, and reports to make. But when ministry begins to displace time with God, the missionary's soul slowly dries up. Outwardly he continues to speak of the gospel and serve people, but within him burden grows greater than joy and duty comes before gratitude.

When personal worship collapses, ministry looks for other fuel. Recognition from others, expansion of the ministry, visible results, and self-righteousness try to fill the empty space. Praise gives energy, while criticism quickly breaks the heart. Visible results bring reassurance, while their absence calls even the missionary's calling into question. When God is not enough, the missionary unknowingly tries to prove himself through ministry.

A missionary must therefore examine his heart often. Am I ministering out of delight in the Lord, or out of a sense that I must do something for him? Do I love the Lord himself more than the joy of being useful? Am I satisfied with him even on ordinary, quiet days? Is time with the Lord the strength of my soul even where no one notices me?

These questions reveal the missionary's true driving force. The greatest danger for a missionary may not be that he stops ministry. The more frightening danger is that he continues ministry while losing God. He may preach the gospel without delighting in the Lord of the gospel, and call others to become worshipers while he himself worships something else.

The missionary must therefore continue returning to the place where he began. He must sit before the Word. In prayer, he must offer his heart to the Lord again. Before going out to the place of ministry, he must remain before God. Before meeting people, he must look to the Lord. Before proclaiming the gospel, he must first find rest within it.

When delight in God is restored, love for people also becomes purer. The missionary no longer sees people as ministry results. Behind the labels convert, attendee, trainee, and local leader, he sees an individual soul. Because he does not look to people for satisfaction, he is able to love them more rightly. He can serve patiently instead of using them in haste.

The direction of ministry also becomes clear. Education, relief, care, and cultural understanding all matter. But none can become the center. Every act of service must lead toward the place where people know Christ, believe in the Lord, and give him glory. Mission may begin with human need, but it must not end there. Mission is ultimately the work of raising worshipers.

In the end, a missionary goes because of God, remains because of God, and endures because of God. He loves people, but does not make them his ultimate purpose. He treasures ministry, but does not make it his identity. He longs for results, but does not bind himself to them. His deepest driving force is his delight in God himself.

The missionary's deepest driving force is delighting in God. When this joy is present, mission becomes more than a heavy obligation; it becomes worship. And mission that begins in true worship moves outward to establish true worshipers.

PART 2

The Missionary's Inner Life

Living Before God



CHAPTER 7

The Missionary's Most Dangerous Condition

*"You and I are each in possession of only one heart,
so the condition of our heart is a huge issue in our
ministry."*

- Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*

The missionary's most dangerous condition may not be one in which ministry has stopped. It may instead be a condition in which ministry continues outwardly, the schedule remains full, the Word is taught, people are met, and reports accumulate, while the heart has drifted away from God. The hands are busy and the lips speak the gospel, but deep within, love for God is growing cold. This is the missionary's most dangerous condition.

It is easy to deceive ourselves on the mission field. We assume that all is well because ministry continues. We are meeting people, teaching the Word, and working for the church, so we tell ourselves that everything must be fine. Yet the motion of ministry does not necessarily prove the health of the heart. A person may be doing the Lord's work outwardly while living inwardly at a distance from him.

Jesus said to people who were religiously zealous, "But I know that you do not have the love of God within you" (John 5:42, ESV). They studied the Scriptures, engaged in religious activity, and believed that they were serving God. Yet the Lord said that the love of God was not within them. His words warn that activity "for" God is possible even without a heart that loves him.

Missionaries are not exempt from this warning. We speak of God, do God's work, and confess that we live for his kingdom. Yet at times love for God grows faint at the center of the heart. A sense of duty, the opinions of others, and confidence in ourselves can take its place. The missionary then easily becomes someone who works to preserve the appearance of a minister rather than someone who serves out of love for God.

Paul Tripp says that a minister's private life cannot be separated from public ministry. We do not possess two hearts. We stand before God with one heart, and with that same heart we serve others. The condition of a missionary's heart is therefore not a private issue detached from ministry. It is deeply connected to the direction, attitude, and fruit of that ministry.

When this is forgotten, the missionary permits a dangerous divided life. He assumes that he can speak publicly of grace while remaining spiritually dry before God in private. He thinks he can teach love on the mission field

while love has grown cold at home. Pride, anger, and fear may be growing in his heart, yet he tells himself that everything is fine as long as the visible ministry continues. The heart may be hidden from people, but it cannot be hidden from God.

The missionary's danger does not always arrive in the form of scandalous sin. Sometimes it comes very quietly. He reads the Word, but his heart is not moved. He prays, but seeks only solutions rather than God. He worships, but thinks more about exhaustion from ministry than delight in the Lord. He meets people, but sees tasks to be handled rather than souls to be loved. If this continues, he may become skilled in ministry while becoming less and less a person who loves God.

The missionary must therefore ask his heart often: Am I doing this out of love for God? Is my longing for God diminishing? Do I delight in remaining before the Lord, or am I postponing fellowship with him in the name of ministry? Do I fear God's gaze more than people's evaluations? Am I living before those closest to me the grace I proclaim in public?

These questions are not intended to condemn the missionary, but to turn his heart back to the Lord. God is not a cruel master who demands only ministry performance; he is a Father who desires our hearts. Before we accomplish many things, the Lord wants us first to abide in him. The missionary's life does not come from the amount of ministry he performs, but from living fellowship with God.

The missionary's most dangerous condition may not be failure to produce ministry fruit. It is doing many things without loving God, speaking of God without remaining before him, and inviting others to worship while failing to worship God oneself.

Ministry built without love for God ultimately reveals the minister himself. But the Lord gladly receives even small acts of obedience that flow from a heart that loves him. We must therefore examine our hearts today and ask whether the fearful warning of Jesus is directed toward us: "But I know that you do not have the love of God within you."

CHAPTER 8

What It Means to Recover Your First Love

"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first."

- Revelation 2:4-5, ESV

Many missionaries encountered the Lord with deep emotion in their youth. The gospel came to them as life itself. There were tears, decisions, and fervent devotion. Drawn by that love, they went to the mission field, prayed, proclaimed, and labored. Those years were certainly grace.

As time passes, however, a question rises from deep within: Have I lost my first love? Compared with the passion of youth, present ministry seems small. Miracles are rare, and answers to prayer are slow. There are more times when God's presence does not feel as intense as it once did, and ordinary life seems to continue without distinction.

We therefore urge ourselves to "recover our first love," and that pressure can lead us into deeper discouragement. A serious misunderstanding lies beneath it: treating first love as the intensity of emotion. We assume that recovering first love means returning to the pure passion of those earlier days, and that the loss of that fervor is the problem. We then try to revive the old emotion by returning to former methods and actions.

But in Revelation, the Lord does not simply command us to reproduce the passionate emotions of the past. He says, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first." To do the works done at first means repenting of a heart that has come to rely on other things more than the Lord and returning to obedience that flows from love for God.

First love was not merely intense emotion. It was the place where God was everything and where God alone was enough. Yet while living as ministers, many other things gradually become important: ministry results, recognition from others, visible fruit, our name, and our role. At times these occupy more of the heart than God, and they begin to determine our joy and despair.

In truth, our first love was pure but immature, passionate but not yet deep. It was sincere, but it had not yet passed through testing. God does not desire merely to return that love to its former condition. He intends to make it grow. This is his purpose.

Love for God deepens into trust that does not collapse when no visible answer to prayer comes, obedience that is not shaken when God leads us along an unwanted road, and steadfastness that holds on to him through long seasons of waiting. Recovering first love is not the recovery of an emotion, but growth into mature love.

In youth, we may have recognized God's love through miracles given to us. Now we learn that love in the truth that God is still working for his own name even when he permits suffering. In earlier days, we expressed our love and passion for God through evangelism and service. Now that love is revealed in faithfully living an ordinary day on the mission field.

At times we must fight the thought that what we are doing is far smaller and more insignificant than we expected. Yet holding fast to the Lord in that struggle is love. Obeying before him without recognition, desiring his name rather than ours to be revealed, and enduring suffering in order to gain God - these are mature expressions of first love.

Recovering first love, therefore, does not mean returning to past emotions. It means returning to the place where delighting in the Lord was itself the goal: valuing the Lord more than ministry success, being satisfied that he knows us more than we desire human praise, and relying more on God's grace than on our own zeal.

Recovering first love does not mean becoming a more "fervent" person. What is restored is not the intensity of emotion, but the direction of love. It is refusing compromise with the world, preserving the purity of love for the One even under persecution, and walking patiently to the end because we love him. This is the recovery of first love. In Christ, God shapes our immature first love into mature love.

CHAPTER 9

A Servant's Prayer, a Prayer That Responds

"Give what you command, and command what you will."

- Augustine of Hippo, Confessions

Most of our prayers are filled with requests. We speak of our needs, list our problems, and ask God to act. This is not wrong in itself, for God is our Father, knows our needs, and hears us. But when prayer goes no deeper, we lose something essential: the posture of a servant.

A servant's prayer does not simply say, "Please do this." It necessarily includes a confession of willingness to obey the Master's will. Yet our prayers sometimes change until we appear to be the master and God the one who must help us. "God, help me do this. Make this happen in this way. I need this, so give it to me." Meanwhile, we often remain silent about the obedience required from us.

When this attitude becomes serious, an unresolved problem leads to complaint, as though God were responsible. We ask God to work, but do not stop before the Word we must obey. We want God to respond to our needs, yet fail to respond to the obedience he has already required.

By grace, we relate to God as Father. But when this relationship is misunderstood, prayer can become whining, a list of anxieties, or even persistent demanding. Pouring out the heart before the Father is precious. Yet when this becomes repeated demand without obedience, prayer grows increasingly self-centered. Prayer that trusts the Father must ultimately offer the self to the Father's Word.

The Lord's Prayer makes this order clear: "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12, ESV). As we ask forgiveness, we are also placed before our responsibility to forgive. Prayer is not merely a channel for receiving something; it is a place where the direction of life is set again before God.

Asking God for forgiveness brings us before the person we must forgive. A prayer for forgiveness cannot become an excuse to postpone forgiving another. The person who asks God for forgiveness must come to the place of confessing, "Lord, I will forgive first. I will not avoid obedience."

Yet prayer does not end with resolve. As servants, we confess our inability to the Lord: "Lord, you know that I cannot forgive in my own strength. Give me the heart and courage to forgive. I cannot do it; give me a willing

heart." This is a servant's prayer. A servant does not avoid the Master's command, but neither does he imagine that he can fulfill it in his own strength.

The prayer of resolve and the prayer for grace belong together. Resolve alone does not last; it eventually collapses or becomes proud. But prayer that delays obedience under the pretext of seeking grace does not change life and remains an escape from responsibility. True prayer holds together the confession "I will obey" and the plea "Give me grace to obey."

Augustine's prayer displays this balance well: "Give what you command, and command what you will." He does not ask God to lower his command. He asks for grace to do what God commands. This is a servant's prayer: not avoiding the Lord's will, but asking for grace to carry it out.

We do not fill prayer only with demands made of God. We respond to his Word, renew our resolve to obey his will, and depend upon him for that obedience. This is a prayer that responds. Our concern cannot remain merely with "prayer that receives an answer." We must move toward "prayer that responds" to the Word of God.

CHAPTER 10

Prayer as the Process of Embracing God's Will

*"We do not pray in order to instruct God, but in
order to rouse ourselves to seek Him."*

- John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, III.20.3

On the mission field, prayer can sometimes become a language for avoiding responsibility. "I will pray about it" may actually mean postponing a decision, avoiding conflict, or transferring responsibility to God. Biblical prayer, however, is never an escape from reality. It is the most realistic of acts, because it brings us before God where we can no longer hide.

We expect God's will to become clearer as we continue praying, yet what often becomes clear first is our own heart. In prayer we see what we desire, what we fear, and what we are unwilling to release. Before prayer is a lamp that reveals God's will, it is like a mirror that exposes the human heart.

The missionary's prayer always contains a tension. On one hand he confesses God's sovereignty; on the other he wants to control ministry results. He says, "Your will be done," while a desired conclusion is already fixed in his heart. When events unfold as he wants, he calls it an answer. When they do not, he says God has not yet answered or assumes that his prayer was insufficient.

Prayer is not only a process of learning God's will. It is also the process by which our hearts are shaped to embrace that will. It is not a time for persuading God to move in the direction we desire, but for aligning our hearts with the direction God desires. In prayer we lay down impatience and confess again that God is good and wise.

Prayer, therefore, is not a time for giving God information. As Calvin said, prayer is a gracious place given for our sake rather than God's. God already knows our circumstances and needs. Yet he calls us to pray so that in prayer our hearts may seek him, depend on him, and bow before his will.

As prayer deepens, the list of requests may become shorter, while what truly matters becomes clearer. We move from simply seeking solutions to depending more deeply on God as our only provider. More than zeal to receive an answer, a longing to remain before God sustains prayer.

Prayer is not a technique for moving God. It is a gracious process in which our hearts are moved before him. Our will is broken, fears are exposed, desires uncovered, and impatience dealt with. There we confess again that the fulfillment of God's will is our true joy and entrusting ourselves to his will is our true peace.

Prayer is therefore an essential discipline of grace for the missionary. In prayer, instead of trying to accomplish what he assumes to be God's work, he learns to see what God is doing now and grows in the desire to participate in it. Prayer is not a time for persuading an unwilling God to work, but for joyfully embracing the will of the God who is good and wise.

CHAPTER 11

Living Between Sin and Mercy

*"I daily need God's work of mercy in order to do his
work of mercy."*

- Paul David Tripp, New Morning Mercies

There is not a single day when sin does not raise its head within us, and not a single day when God's mercy is not new. This fact reveals the reality of faith without embellishment. It also shows precisely where we must stand. Faith is not life in an ideal state, but life dependent upon God between the two realities of sin and mercy.

The missionary's life is no exception. If anything, these two realities appear there more clearly. We sometimes imagine that missionaries have overcome the problem of sin. But maturity is not the absence of sin; it is deeper dependence on grace. Ministry is possible not because sin has disappeared from me, but because God's mercy toward me, a sinner, never ceases.

Every day we discover that sin remains alive within us: irritation that bursts out in weariness, the desire to prove our worth through ministry, comparison and envy, subtle self-righteousness, and a heart that loves ministry more than God. This is not the portrait of an unusually fallen missionary, but the reality of a believer in whom sin still remains.

We need neither be surprised by the sin within us nor deny it. We must face it honestly and move toward God's mercy. The problem is that we often lose this balance. On some days we see only sin and fall into deep discouragement under self-condemnation. On other days we speak only of mercy, treating sin lightly and settling for comfort and self-justification without repentance.

Mercy that does not face sin becomes cheap grace, while awareness of sin that does not hold fast to mercy becomes despair. The missionary's life must stand upon both truths at once: I am still a sinner, and God is still merciful. These truths do not weaken one another. Rather, each makes the other clearer.

The more honestly we understand our weakness, the more real God's mercy becomes. The more deeply we know his mercy, the more strength we receive to fight sin. Before a missionary is someone who shows mercy, he is someone who needs mercy. Only when he honestly faces the sin that remains within and leans upon God's mercy, new every day, can he proclaim the God who is rich in compassion and mercy.

Prayer

Lord, I confess that sin still lives within me. Even while serving, I wanted to display myself, and even while helping others, I became angry when things did not go my way. Apart from your mercy, I cannot stand for a single day.

Yet, Lord, I believe that your mercy is greater than my sin. Do not let me treat my sin lightly, but do not let me fall into despair because of it. Have mercy on me today and raise me again within your compassion.

Do not let me forget that before I am someone who shows mercy, I am someone who has received mercy. Through me today, reveal the God who is rich in compassion and mercy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

Prayer Entrusted to God's Sovereignty

and the Holy Spirit

*"The ministry of the Spirit is to bring us under the
lordship of Christ."*

- Sinclair B. Ferguson, The Holy Spirit

Many missionaries pray for their ministries and for those they evangelize, looking in faith for answers. They list prayer requests and set goals they hope will be achieved through prayer. Yet answers are often exaggerated or summarized vaguely as simply having been a blessing. When this pattern continues, prayer becomes formal, and specific requests can degenerate into religious slogans expressing what the missionary wants or what the church hopes to accomplish.

At the center of biblical prayer, however, is trust in God's sovereignty. Prayer is not a means of forcing the result we want, but an act of acknowledging who God is. God is the Father who knows and hears our needs, but he does not exist to fulfill our desires. He is the sovereign Lord who works wisely, according to his good will, and in his own time.

Our understanding of the Holy Spirit is revealed here. Even while speaking of God's sovereignty, we easily treat the Spirit as a power or means for accomplishing our requests. But the Holy Spirit is not an instrument for fulfilling our desires. He is the personal God who brings us under the lordship of Christ.

Prayer entrusted to the Holy Spirit is therefore first a prayer that releases our stubborn will. A prayer that began by asking for a desired outcome changes into a confession that longs for the Lord's will to be done even in this situation and asks for grace to follow it. The Spirit sometimes opens the path we desire, but at other times he leads us to relinquish even the path we had believed to be the only one.

This becomes especially clear when praying for someone we hope to evangelize. The missionary earnestly prays that a person with whom he has built a long relationship and shared the gospel will return to God. The deeper his love, the more earnest the prayer. He longs for that person to hear the gospel, turn, believe in the Lord, and receive life. Such prayer is never light.

Yet earnestness is not the power to determine the outcome we desire. The missionary cannot decide when, how, or in what manner someone will return to God. We do not know whether that person will minister with us, remain in the church, or eventually take a different road. Faith is not the

ability to secure the future we want, but the posture of trusting that God will act in goodness and wisdom.

Even prayer for an unbeliever must therefore not turn into impatience or obsession. We love the person, proclaim the gospel, and pray with tears. But we do not use shallow methods to manufacture a response. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and brings a person to confess faith.

A missionary may sow and water, but God gives the growth. Sometimes God allows us the joy of harvest. At other times he entrusts that fruit to another worker or another generation. In neither case does God's will fail. In God's time and way, the Holy Spirit calls God's people and brings them under the lordship of Christ.

Prayer entrusted to God's sovereignty and the Holy Spirit ultimately makes the missionary faithful. It keeps him from becoming intoxicated by success or collapsing under failure, and helps him distinguish between what he must do and what he must entrust to God. A missionary is not someone who manufactures results, but a servant given the privilege of being used as a channel for what God intends to accomplish.

PART 3

Family

The Beginning and Standard of Ministry



CHAPTER 13

The Missionary's Family Is the First Church

"These biblical imperatives reveal God's priority that a pastor should first shepherd and care for his family before his flock."

- Brian Croft, The Pastor's Family

A missionary is sent to establish the church. Yet Scripture clearly shows where a missionary must first learn what the church is: in the family. God does not entrust souls to a missionary at random. The first people he entrusts are the missionary's spouse and children. The family is therefore the missionary's first field of ministry, and his wife and children are the first flock God has placed in his care.

When this is missed, the missionary falls into the contradiction of sacrificing the family first entrusted by the Lord in the name of doing God's work. The needs of the church appear great. Requests from believers sound urgent, ministry schedules lie immediately before him, and visits, meetings, and gatherings continually demand his time. The family, however, usually waits quietly. Because a wife and children know how busy the missionary is, they find it difficult to ask for his time. Those closest to him are therefore the easiest to push aside.

We have seen many ministers who became distant from their wives and children while devoting themselves to ministry. Meetings, visits, and ministry engagements increase, while conversation at home decreases. They are kind to people in the church but inattentive to those in their own home. Yet another church built while the community of faith within the family is collapsing cannot be healthy. If those closest to us do not experience love, where will a more distant community learn that love?

I too had to learn this painfully. I spent time and money on children in the mission field, played with them, and tried to treat them kindly. Then I realized that I had failed to do the same for my own children. At times I even left a sick child at home in order to visit a church member. I regarded it then as an unavoidable choice for ministry, but my child remembered it differently.

Years later, one of my children recalled a time when there were not enough snacks at church. I had asked my child to give hers up so that I could give it to another child. It may have looked like a small act of consideration to me, but it left my child with the wound, "I am not my father's priority." Hearing this, I realized that while I spoke of loving the

children on the mission field, I had failed to care adequately for the heart of my own child, whom God had entrusted to me first.

Teaching a child to yield is not always wrong. There are times in ministry when the whole family must make sacrifices. But when the sacrifice is repeated, and when it is always demanded of those closest to us, the child may understand it differently. Instead of thinking, "Our family is serving together," the child may come to believe, "I am always pushed to the back."

Before a missionary's child is a partner in ministry, that child is a sheep God has entrusted to the missionary. Loving the souls God gives us does not begin far away; it must begin in the place nearest to us. We often say that we would devote our lives even for "one soul," while failing to include our wife and children among those souls.

Children learn what God is like by watching how their father treats their mother. Daily life at home is a more powerful education in faith than a missionary's sermon. When a father respects and sacrificially loves their mother, the children see the gospel. When he listens to them, keeps his promises, and knows how to apologize, they learn that grace is more than a doctrine spoken in words. Conversely, when cynicism and indifference are repeated at home, the gospel may appear to them as a hypocritical message.

Caring for one's family is therefore neither a burden on ministry nor a separate ministry added to it. Family and local church belong together. At times a missionary must slow the pace of ministry in order to attend to his wife's spiritual condition and his children's hearts. Some appointments must be postponed, some requests declined, and sometimes he must remain with his family rather than with church members. This does not treat ministry lightly; it rightly orders the responsibilities God has entrusted.

This does not mean making the family an idol in order to avoid the hardship and sacrifice of ministry. Ministry is difficult, and sacrifice is necessary. A missionary's family may need to weep and persevere together within that calling. Yet biblical sacrifice does not take the form of

repeatedly neglecting those closest to us. Giving more time to the family and practicing love there does not weaken ministry; it places ministry within biblical order.

The family is not an obstacle to ministry, but its first setting. It does not replace the local church. Yet the missionary's family is the small community in which the gospel he proclaims is first practiced. God desires first to reveal the reality of the gospel through the missionary's home. We cannot claim to love sheep far away while failing to love the sheep nearest to us. The missionary's family is his first church.

Shepherding Is Not a Technique

but a Pattern of Life

"God has designed your family-not the youth group, not the children's ministry, not the Christian school, but your family-as the principal discipling agent in your children's lives. The most important job you have as a parent is to train and disciple your children."

- Voddie Baucham, Family Driven Faith

A missionary teaches people. He proclaims the Word, explains the gospel, exhorts believers, and nurtures new Christians. As ministry deepens, he learns to care for hearts, encourage growth in faith, and serve souls patiently. But if we think of shepherding as a skill learned on the mission field, we miss its most important reality.

Shepherding is not a technique but a pattern of life. It is not an ability that suddenly appears in the pulpit or a special gift exercised only during pastoral visits. It is formed within repeated relationships: listening, waiting, explaining, forgiving, exhorting again, and praying together. In this sense, a missionary's shepherding is revealed first in the place nearest to him, his family.

A person may appear to be a patient pastor at church and become easily irritated at home. He may repeat the same explanation many times to a believer, yet press his child with, "Why don't you understand even this?" He may sympathize with a new believer's weakness while treating the weakness of his wife and children as an annoyance. Our responses at home are not accidental. They reveal what kind of minister we truly are.

A missionary's child does not automatically grow in faith simply by being a missionary's child. Children observe their parents' ministry closely, but that does not mean they understand the gospel. They see what happens in church, hear how their parents speak to people, and experience what is repeatedly postponed because of ministry. They need more than additional time inside the church; they need to learn through their parents how the gospel becomes life.

Many missionaries make detailed plans for church ministry. They prepare Bible-study materials, schedule discipleship training, plan visits, and record the condition of those they serve. Yet they often have no plan for caring for the souls of their own children. Saying that we love our children is different from shepherding them in practice. Love does not remain a vague emotion; it takes the form of repeated time, attention, and conversation.

Shepherding children does not require an elaborate program. It can begin with the small habit of spending individual time with a child, reading the

Word, asking about the child's heart, and praying together. Every child has a different temperament, different concerns, and different questions of faith. One child talks freely; another does not open up easily. One enjoys Bible stories; another watches the parents' lives more closely. Children cannot be shepherded only as a group. Each child must be seen as an individual soul.

A missionary must teach the Word to his children, but not merely by transmitting information. He must show how God's Word speaks into their sin, fear, and conflict. When a child lies, he can teach not only a moral lesson but why the human heart hides from God. When a child is afraid, he can speak of God's sovereignty and goodness. When a child fails, he can show the forgiveness and restoration found in the gospel.

The gospel must not be taught to children too shallowly. Children can learn truths deeper than we sometimes assume. Language appropriate to their age is necessary, but explaining something simply is not the same as making the gospel superficial. Children also need the truths of sin, grace, the cross, substitutionary atonement, justification, repentance, faith, and sanctification. Just as a missionary labors to explain the gospel to people in an unfamiliar language, he must help his own children understand it in language suited to their generation.

Nothing in a missionary's home will be perfect. Parents fail often. Children may see their parents argue, find that promised time is not kept, hear sharp words spoken out of weariness, or experience a parent closing his heart at home under the weight of ministry. What matters is not creating a family without failure. What matters is repenting, apologizing, and returning to the gospel when failure occurs. Children learn the gospel not through perfect parents, but through parents who depend on grace.

Shepherding in a missionary's family must therefore become a repeated pattern of life rather than a special event. A set time for reading the Word matters, but so does conversation at the table: asking about a child's day, taking a child's fear seriously, correcting wrong with the Word and praying together, making small efforts to keep promises, and honestly

saying, "I am sorry" after failure. Through such repeated acts, children see how the gospel lives and moves within the home.

Before shepherding is a technique for caring for people far away, it is a way of loving people nearby. A missionary cannot act like a shepherd only at church. His language, attitudes, and choices at home form his shepherding. God shapes the missionary as a shepherd through his family, and the patience, listening, prayer, and love learned there eventually appear in his service to the church. Shepherding is not a technique but a pattern of life.

Family Worship Is Not Optional Devotion

but the Foundation of Public Ministry

"In many churches and homes family worship is an optional thing, or at most a superficial exercise such as a brief table grace before meals."

- Joel R. Beeke, Family Worship

Many ministers are rigorous about public worship but lenient about family worship. They prepare the Sunday sermon but not the Word at the family table. They never miss worship in the pulpit, while easily postponing worship at home according to circumstances. Because they are busy, because conditions are difficult, or because the children cannot concentrate, family worship is continually treated as optional.

Family worship is not an additional activity practiced only when a minister's schedule allows. It is a place of grace through which God sustains the missionary's family by the Word and prayer. Under the pressure of ministry, the family is easily scattered. The father is bound to ministry schedules, the mother grows weary between the burdens of home and ministry, and the children quietly fall behind other priorities amid their parents' busyness. It is no small thing for such a family to stand together again before God's Word.

This does not mean family worship must always follow a rigid form. I did not understand this well at first. When our oldest daughter was young, I tried to enforce the form of family worship too strictly. I remember scolding her because she did not kneel to pray. At the time, I believed I was teaching her to worship rightly. With time I realized that if such treatment continued, family worship could become for a child not a joyful time with God, but a heavy time to be endured.

The strength of family worship lies not in perfection of form, but in repeated direction. Young children may be restless, teenagers may respond indifferently, and parents themselves may sit down exhausted. What matters is repeatedly confessing within the home, "God is the center of our family."

The form of family worship may change as children grow. With young children, it may include a short Bible story, pictures, songs with motions, and simple activities. With older children, the family can read a passage and discuss questions. With teenagers, they may read and discuss a book or study a catechism together. Video resources may sometimes help them read and understand Scripture. The important thing is not fixing one

form, but allowing God's Word and prayer to continue flowing through the home in ways suited to the children's growth and circumstances.

Family worship is not always moving. Sometimes it feels formal or distracted, and sometimes it takes place when relationships are strained. During certain seasons, its pattern may stop because of many demands and circumstances. But stopping does not mean we must give up. What matters is not maintaining it perfectly, but beginning again in grace.

If family worship has been absent for a long time, parents can first talk with their children. They can say, "It would be good for us to stand together again before God's Word," and begin with once a week rather than an unrealistic plan. They can read the Word in a relaxed setting, share briefly, and pray together. As the habit gradually forms, they may increase the frequency.

The approach may be different with adult children. If a long formal service together is difficult, the family can begin by setting aside time to share about life and exchange prayer requests. Listening to a child's concerns, sharing the parents' requests, and praying for one another can become an important restoration of family worship. Standing together before God may take different forms according to a child's age, but its center remains the same: the family turns again toward God in the Word and prayer.

Sowing seed does not happen only in dramatic moments. The same Word is heard repeatedly, the same gospel is explained again, and the same grace is taken hold of once more. God plants seeds of truth in a child's heart through these small, repeated moments. This is no different from the way people on the mission field come to faith.

Family worship is not optional devotion. It is a place of grace where the missionary's family stands before God, a channel through which children learn the gospel in daily life, and a time when the minister is supplied again by the Word and prayer. Before a missionary establishes a church far away, God desires first to establish a worshiping community within his home. Family worship is the foundation of public ministry.

CHAPTER 16

A Missionary's Wife

Before a Ministry Partner, a Sheep Entrusted by God

*"A husband should be mindful of his wife's needs,
struggles, and feelings."*

- Brian Croft, The Pastor's Family

Missionaries and pastors often think of their wives as people who should understand them. Ministry is busy, so she should understand; the calling is great, so she should support it; and a certain degree of sacrifice by wife and children for God's kingdom may seem only natural. Scripture, however, does not place a wife in that position. It teaches a husband to treasure her not as a casualty or assistant of ministry, but as a person God has entrusted to him.

A missionary wife is her husband's precious partner. They pray, serve, weep, and rejoice together. Yet before she is a partner in ministry, she is the first sheep God has entrusted to the missionary. More important than how well she helps the ministry is how faithfully her husband cares for her with the love of Christ.

A wife is the witness who sees a missionary husband's character most closely. What can be hidden in the pulpit cannot be hidden at home. He may appear gentle before believers yet become easily irritated and indifferent before his wife. He may speak kindly to women in the church while speaking rudely to his own wife. These things cannot be excused by saying, "You understand me better than anyone."

Peter tells husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way and to honor them as fellow heirs of the grace of life. A wife is not less important than her husband, but a sister who has received the same grace in Christ. A missionary must not evaluate his wife by her usefulness to ministry: how capable she is, how much she can endure, or how much work she carries. She is first a person to be loved, protected, and shepherded.

A missionary's wife bears many invisible burdens. She must adapt to an unfamiliar culture, care for children, and endure recurring tension and loneliness caused by her husband's ministry. At times she faces expectations from the church; at other times she must persevere quietly where no one notices. A husband may see the church's needs clearly while failing to see his wife's. Her tired face, fewer words, heightened sensitivity, and repeated silence may be signals calling for his attentive pastoral care.

During the early days of church planting, we often had to learn this. As ministry increased and the care of people continued, my wife sometimes became easily exhausted and discouraged. We then tried intentionally to make time for just the two of us. We would drive somewhere quiet or watch a movie together. Outwardly, this may have seemed unrelated to ministry. But we tried not to begrudge that time. It was not simply a break from ministry, but a time to look again at the person nearest to us whom God had given us to love, and to recover together.

Attending carefully to my wife's emotions was not easy. Our temperaments differed, we misunderstood each other, and we could interpret the same situation in entirely different ways. What mattered was not perfect understanding, but a continuing willingness to talk. Listening to each other's hearts, receiving what we heard, and adjusting again takes a long time. It is still in progress. Loving one's wife does not end with a single decision; it is obedience that must be learned and chosen again each day.

We ministers sometimes feel no concern about neglecting love for our wives because we are doing the Lord's work. Some foolishly push their families aside, saying, "I love the Lord more than my wife and children." Yet someone who loves the Lord loves the people the Lord loves and has entrusted to him. How can a man claim to love the unseen God while failing to love his wife, the person visible and nearest to him? Loving one's wife and loving Jesus are not competing loyalties. Loving one's wife is among the nearest commands to obey precisely because one loves Jesus.

Loving a missionary's wife does not mean it is always easy. Both wife and husband are sinners. Their weaknesses repeatedly appear, and misunderstandings and wounds arise. Yet the gospel keeps the couple from ending in condemnation and avoidance. The husband must not see his wife merely as someone to correct, but as a person who needs grace together with him. When he sees her weakness, he must also see his own, and together they must come before the grace of Christ.

A missionary's wife is not an assistant or instrument for ministry. She is a gift God has given her husband and a person with whom he shares the

grace of life. Before claiming to love souls far away, the missionary must love the wife nearest to him. He must attend to her needs, listen to her struggles, take her feelings seriously, pray with her, and gladly make time for them to recover together.

(If the reader is a missionary wife or the wife of a minister, the same principle can be used to examine her own heart. When her husband is exhausted by ministry, is she only criticizing his weakness? Does she remain in resentment because she feels that a heavier burden has fallen on her? Has she become more accustomed to criticism than to praying for and strengthening his ministry? Respecting her husband according to Scripture and supporting his leadership through prayer is precious obedience before the Lord.)

PART 4

Mission Rebuilt upon the Gospel



The Starting Point of Mission

Humanity or God?

*"Answers can be given solely on the basis of
Scripture. For the work of missions is the work of
God."*

- J. H. Bavinck, An Introduction to the Science of Missions

Where does mission begin? This is not merely a methodological question. It is a theological question asking whether mission begins with human need or with God's revelation. Is there a neutral point within human beings where the gospel can naturally be received? Or do human beings possess knowledge of God while suppressing that truth in unrighteousness? The answer determines the entire direction of mission.

On the mission field, we often want to believe that human beings possess some religious potential. Every culture appears to contain traces of a search for God, and every religion seems to have elements that can be connected with the gospel. General revelation does testify that the created world bears traces of God. Human beings were made in God's image and have knowledge of God through conscience and creation. But Scripture does not stop there. Romans 1 says that people do not hold fast to this truth; they suppress it in unrighteousness.

At this point, the Reformed understanding of mission is not optimistic about humanity. Human beings do not merely lack information about the gospel. Although they possess knowledge of God, they neither glorify him nor give thanks. The problem is not ignorance but rebellion. Mission must therefore begin not with religious potential remaining in humanity, but with God, who seeks sinners and reveals himself.

The question of the "point of contact," which J. H. Bavinck treated as important, must therefore be understood carefully. A missionary must not ignore people's language, culture, and religious questions. He must listen to and understand their world. Yet this contact point is not neutral ground within humanity where the gospel can establish itself naturally. The missionary does not make human religiosity the basis of receptivity, but reveals before God's revelation how that religiosity has been distorted.

Emil Brunner's discussion of the point of contact raised an important issue for mission and apologetics. He sought to identify within humanity a point still capable of hearing God's Word. Karl Barth strongly opposed this view, and the Reformed tradition likewise warns against speaking as though a natural point of contact remains within humanity. If we suggest that human beings possess a natural capacity enabling encounter with

God, conversion and regeneration may be misunderstood not as acts of grace, but as the realization of an inherent human possibility.

As Herman Bavinck emphasized in *Reformed Dogmatics*, revelation is essentially God's act of making himself known. Human beings do not climb upward and discover God; God stoops and speaks. Mission follows this direction of revelation. A missionary does not draw faith out of human religious longing, but bears witness to the gospel God has revealed in Christ.

Mission therefore cannot be reduced to a conversation in which two religions meet as equals and identify common ground. This does not mean missionaries may ignore dialogue or people's lives. They should listen deeply, speak carefully, and take culture and life context seriously. Yet dialogue cannot replace proclamation, and cultural understanding cannot become the standard of the gospel.

The purpose of mission is not to discover and develop a possibility already present within humanity. Mission reveals who sinners are before God and proclaims what God has done in Christ. Human beings cannot come to God by themselves, but God has come to sinners in Christ. Humanity suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, but through the gospel God illumines darkened hearts.

This corresponds to the point Machen repeatedly made in *Christianity and Liberalism*. Christianity is not religious advice about what human beings must do to save themselves. It is the good news of what God has done in Christ to save sinners. The missionary therefore does not begin with humanity and try to reach God. He begins with what God has done and places humanity before that gospel.

This distinction is crucial on the mission field. Mission that begins with humanity easily places human need, suffering, culture, and response at the center. Mission that begins with God does not ignore human need, but interprets it within God's holiness, the reality of sin, and Christ's redemption. Human wounds matter, but they cannot become more fundamental than sin. Culture matters, but it cannot become a standard preceding revelation.

Human beings do not merely need help; they are accountable before God. They need more than comfort; they must be called to repentance and faith. True mission therefore does not reconstruct the gospel around human need, but reveals within God's revelation both humanity's misery and its only hope.

The power of mission does not come from a human capacity to be persuaded. It comes from the gospel itself and the work of the Holy Spirit. The absence of a neutral starting point within humanity does not weaken mission. It makes the missionary humbler and bolder. He does not depend on human potential, but on the fact that God speaks and the Spirit works.

The starting point of mission, therefore, is not humanity but God. God created, God spoke, God saved in Christ, and God opens sinners' hearts by the Spirit. The missionary is a witness called to participate in this work of God. Mission is not built upon human possibility, but upon God's revelation and gospel.

Evangelism without Repentance

*"How can a man truly believe in the Lord Jesus
Christ as his savior if he doesn't repent?"*

- Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Lloyd-Jones on Repentance"

Mission today appears highly active. Many mission agencies and networks still operate throughout the world, and strategies and training programs are increasingly diverse. Mission, once understood largely as a Western enterprise, is also becoming more polycentric through the participation of churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Yet outward activity does not necessarily mean that the gospel is being proclaimed clearly. We must ask again: Are we truly preaching the right gospel?

In many mission settings, the center of evangelism has become blurred. The proclamation of sin and repentance weakens, while comfort, assistance, community participation, and improved living are emphasized. An invitation to participate in Christian culture may come before the call to return to God. This differs from the biblical structure of the gospel.

A more serious problem is not only the complete absence of repentance, but the superficial way it is often treated. We move immediately to forgiveness through faith before adequately addressing the gravity of sin. After a brief presentation, people may be led to repeat a "prayer of acceptance" and thank God within that prayer for already forgiving their sins. Yet we often fail to examine whether they understand sin before God, recognize the seriousness of their own sin, truly desire to turn from it, and possess genuine repentance and faith.

The gospel is certainly the news of forgiveness, and the missionary must proclaim forgiving grace boldly. The problem is not proclaiming forgiveness, but declaring it without diagnosing sin and giving assurance without looking for the fruit of repentance. Forgiveness easily becomes religious comfort to someone who has never seen the depth of sin, and assurance without repentance can become false peace. The gospel is not positive thinking that makes people comfortable; it is the gracious proclamation that places sinners before God and leads them to Christ.

In Scripture the gospel is always proclaimed with repentance. Jesus began his public ministry by declaring, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17, ESV). Peter cried, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins"

(Acts 2:38, ESV). Paul summarized his ministry as testifying "of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21, ESV).

The risen Lord gave the same vision of mission to his disciples: "repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47, ESV). The promise that the gospel will reach all nations includes both forgiveness and repentance. When the Jewish believers heard that the Spirit had come upon the Gentile household of Cornelius, they confessed, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18, ESV).

This does not mean that the act of repentance is itself the ground of forgiveness. The ground is Christ's cross alone, and sinners receive that grace through faith alone. Yet biblical faith cannot be separated from repentance. Faith without repentance is not the "saving faith" of Scripture. True faith is accompanied by repentance that turns from sin toward God.

Jesus did not come merely to call sinners. He came "to call ... sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32, ESV). Evangelism that treats repentance superficially therefore fails to proclaim the whole gospel. Without the gravity of sin and true repentance, grace becomes cheap comfort. Without God's holiness and severe judgment, the cross becomes only a moving symbol of love. Without the Spirit's work of regeneration and renewal, faith is reduced to personal decision or self-persuasion.

The first result of superficial repentance is false assurance. People may attend church, become familiar with Christian language, and participate in ministry without deeply facing the fact that they are sinners before God. They may say, "I am a sinner," yet neither hate sin, love holiness, nor depend on Christ's grace, while still regarding themselves as sound believers.

The same problem can recur while nurturing believers. Instead of honestly addressing indwelling sin, we move too quickly to shallow comfort because we fear that they may feel guilt or burden. "Jesus has already forgiven everything" can express gospel truth. But if it covers sin lightly

rather than leading to repentance and the mortification of sin, it is not true gospel comfort.

Christians have already been justified, but their battle with sin is not over. They have become new people in Christ, yet still fight the desires of the flesh and remaining sin. What believers need is not condemnation, but honest recognition of sin within the gospel; not despair, but a life of mortification dependent on the Spirit. The gospel is not a phrase that casually covers guilt and fear of punishment. It is the power that leads us to confess and forsake sin and come to Christ.

Evangelism without repentance ultimately produces a community without the fruit of repentance. The church may become not a holy people, but a gathering that meets religious needs. People receive help and comfort but never learn to forsake sin and live under Christ's rule. The church then fails both to be distinct from the world and to correct or discipline worldly values within itself by the Word.

This danger appears clearly on the mission field. Many may come to a local church seeking material benefits, emotional comfort, better relationships, or an improved life. Missionaries must not ignore suffering. Helping the poor, comforting the wounded, and serving practical needs matter. Yet none can replace the gospel proclamation that calls sinners to God.

We must guard against mission that brings people into church activities under the name of a "point of contact" while never placing them before Christ's lordship. If sin and repentance, the cross and faith, and the lordship of Christ are not clearly proclaimed at the center of mission, we may be producing religious participants rather than converts.

The crisis of mission begins not with the absence of strategy, but with a reduction of gospel content. Evangelism without repentance may appear gentler, approach people more comfortably, be accepted more easily, and gain quicker responses. But evangelism that does not call sinners to repentance and faith is not biblical evangelism.

This does not mean proclaiming repentance harshly or coldly. True proclamation of repentance is not a technique of condemnation, but an invitation of grace. Like a physician accurately diagnosing a serious illness, it addresses the grave human problem of sin biblically and compassionately. The missionary speaks of sin in order to reveal Christ's cross, and calls for repentance in order to help people come to the throne of grace.

Even now, God calls his people from every nation and grants them repentance that leads to life. The missionary is a channel of that call. True evangelism leads sinners to Christ in repentance and faith.

CHAPTER 19

True Spiritual Warfare

A Missionary Fighting with the Gospel on the Battlefield of the
Heart

*"James teaches the classic mode of warfare in its
distilled essence: repentance, faith, and action."*

- David Powlison, Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare

On the mission field, "spiritual warfare" is used as powerful language. Ministries may emphasize casting out demons, breaking "regional powers of darkness," and changing the spiritual atmosphere. Missionaries must not treat the reality of evil spirits lightly. Scripture clearly speaks of Satan's work and the activity of evil spirits. Ephesians 6 says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers over this present darkness, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Yet biblical spiritual warfare cannot be reduced to superstitious fear or a contest of power. The weapons in Ephesians 6 are truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. Biblical warfare is not vague spiritual pronouncement about an unseen world, but standing upon truth in Christ, resisting sin and falsehood, and living by the Word and prayer. Missionaries must teach believers this warfare.

At the center of true spiritual warfare stands Christ's victory. We do not fight because we fear Satan's attacks, but because Christ has already broken the power of sin, death, and Satan through the cross and resurrection. The missionary does not fight to obtain victory; he fights while holding fast to the victory given in Christ. Spiritual warfare is therefore not a frightening struggle in an unknown realm, but a moral struggle firmly established by the gospel and faith.

The primary battlefield is the human heart. David Powlison explains spiritual warfare not merely as conflict with external evil spirits, but as the struggle of repentance, faith, and obedience. He says James teaches its classic pattern as "repentance, faith, and action." James 4 commands resistance to the devil while connecting it with submission to God, drawing near to God, cleansing the hands, purifying the heart, and humbling oneself before the Lord.

This shows that spiritual warfare is essentially a moral battle. James does not blame every quarrel and conflict only on demons outside us. He asks where fights and quarrels come from and traces them to passions at war within. Spiritual warfare is therefore not merely commanding evil spirits, but repenting before God of our desires, pride, and divided hearts. Faith

draws near to God; action rejects sin and chooses righteousness in a way worthy of that faith.

Biblical spiritual warfare is also a matter of identity. We have already become new people in Christ, yet we still live fighting the sin that remains within. This struggle does not end through a single exercise of power. It is a repeated battle in daily choices to reject desire, pride, and self-righteousness. Paul says:

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness" (Romans 6:12-13, ESV).

This battle is real for missionaries: the desire to control believers, the subtle wish to boast in ministry results, superiority and inferiority arising from comparison, anger and cynicism toward those who do not recognize us, and indifference and irritation at home. These may be the actual field of spiritual warfare. When warfare is defined only as an external problem, the missionary loses the opportunity to examine his own heart.

In a mission field such as Thailand, where Buddhist and Brahmanic rituals are intertwined with animistic fear, idolatry and superstitious fear genuinely matter. Missionaries must neither dismiss them nor mock local fears. People live with fear of an unseen world, and that fear deeply affects their way of life, relationships, and decisions. The gospel gives a clear answer: Christ is Lord over every power, and God's people no longer need to be enslaved to darkness.

Many Thai believers continue to struggle with fear of ghosts and spirits after conversion. When a family member becomes ill, some wonder whether they have angered an ancestor or local spirit. Some are pressured to believe disaster will come upon the family if they refuse household sacrifices or village rites. Others, after lives bound to divination, amulets, auspicious days, and spiritual rituals, take a long time after coming to Christ to leave behind the practices they once trusted. This is not merely ignorance. It is a real spiritual battle involving fear, family and social

pressure, old ways of life, and the heart's tendency to trust something other than God.

The missionary cannot simply say, "There is no need to fear demons." Nor should he intensify fear or offer stronger religious techniques. Believers need not secrets about a mysterious spiritual world, but the gospel. They must be taught that Christ is Lord over every power, reminded repeatedly of who they are in Christ, and nurtured to stand by the Word, prayer, and faith when fear comes.

Abandoning visible idols and superstitious rites is not the whole of conversion. Idolatry and superstitious fear concern not only external acts, but the heart that grasps and trusts something other than God. Even after conversion, believers continue fighting greed, fear, and former ways of life. Spiritual warfare does not end when idols are discarded; it continues as we obey the Spirit and put the old self to death daily.

When believers are tempted by fear to return to old ways, missionaries must exhort them with the Word and pray with them. Under family pressure, they must be helped to hold fast to their new identity in Christ. When anger, greed, sexual immorality, falsehood, and envy appear, believers must see these not merely as personality problems, but as spiritual warfare to be fought within the gospel.

The church community must also build one another up in the Word and prayer and stand together against sin, falsehood, and fear. Spiritual warfare is not the heroic story of a strong individual. Believers exhort one another, confess sin, and restore fallen brothers and sisters. The missionary is a shepherd who helps the community build one another by faith rather than fear, the Word rather than superstition, and gospel grace rather than condemnation.

True spiritual warfare is fighting with the gospel on the battlefield of the heart. The missionary believes that Christ has already won, and within that victory continues to resist sin, falsehood, and temptation. In the battle, he brings himself and believers back before the gospel.

Are We Preaching the Cross?

*"Nothing reveals the gravity of sin like the cross. ...
The essential background to the cross, therefore, is a
balanced understanding of the gravity of sin and the
majesty of God."*

- John Stott, The Cross of Christ

The cross is still widely used in the church today. It stands above places of worship and is often mentioned in songs, sermons, and prayers. Yet frequent mention does not necessarily mean that the cross remains at the center of the gospel. As John Stott emphasized in *The Cross of Christ*, Christian faith cannot treat the cross as a peripheral ornament. When the cross is displaced from the center, Christianity may appear gentler and more refined, but it no longer retains the form of the apostolic gospel.

The same is true of mission. On the mission field, the cross is sometimes postponed as a difficult doctrine to be explained later rather than proclaimed as the starting point of evangelism. The message may be delayed in order first to open people's hearts, reduce cultural resistance, or meet local needs. But mission that pushes the cross aside loses the center of the gospel, however active and fruitful it may appear.

The cross is not our strategy; it is our message. It is not one message among many, but the center of the message. The missionary is called to bear witness to Christ crucified.

The apostle Paul said, "we preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23, ESV). It was a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but Paul did not alter the message. He did not turn the cross into religious wisdom or philosophical teaching more acceptable to his age. The cross cannot be adjusted to human preference; it is the unique saving event God accomplished to save sinners.

The cross reveals human sin. Before it, humanity stands not merely as wounded or in need of help, but as sinful and rebellious against God. The very necessity of the cross reveals the gravity of sin. If sin were a minor problem, the Son of God would not have needed to die on the cross.

At the same time, the cross reveals God's grace. It is not merely a moving scene displaying divine love. It is the event in which the holy God judged sin while personally opening in Christ the way of substitutionary atonement to save his people. God's justice and love do not conflict at the cross. God does not treat sin lightly, yet reveals grace that saves sinners.

Comfort without the cross is not gospel comfort. Love without the cross does not fully speak of God's love. Forgiveness without the cross cannot explain the cost of sin, and mission without the cross cannot finally lead people to Christ. The missionary must proclaim not merely a better life or religious security, but forgiveness and new life given in Christ crucified.

The missionary must therefore be a witness rather than someone who merely adapts to the world. He should learn culture and language, understand people's lives, and listen to their suffering. But cultural understanding cannot determine the content of the gospel. The missionary does not fit the gospel to the world; he bears witness to the gospel before the world.

The gospel is not private comfort or personal preference. It is public truth. The cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not merely religious symbols that comfort an individual heart. They are God's saving event to be proclaimed before every human being, culture, and power.

There is nevertheless a temptation on the mission field to reduce the offense of the cross. The language of sin and judgment sounds uncomfortable, substitution and bloodshed feel strange, and the claim that Christ is the only way of salvation appears exclusive. The gospel is therefore sometimes explained only through the language of love and friendship, healing and restoration, community and peace. The gospel certainly brings these things, but they are fruit that comes through the cross; they cannot replace the cross that reveals sin, judgment, and substitutionary punishment.

A missionary who bears witness to the cross does not fear people's responses. He knows the message may sound uncomfortable, but he does not weaken it to remove the discomfort. The cross breaks human pride, destroys self-righteousness, and reveals that no one can stand without grace. It always humbles people. Yet it is precisely in that lowly place that sinners encounter grace.

The cross also changes the method of mission. It demands self-denial from the missionary. A missionary cannot proclaim the cross while living

to display his own righteousness. If his message is the cross, his way of ministry must also take the form of humility, sacrifice, and service.

The missionary does not adjust the cross in order to adapt to the world. He testifies before the world to the sin and grace it reveals. The cross is not an ornament of mission, but its center; not a tool, but the message itself. A true missionary is therefore not ashamed of the cross. Like Paul, he boasts only in the cross and proclaims Christ crucified (Galatians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2).

CHAPTER 21

How Does a Missionary Who Believes

in Limited Atonement Evangelize?

*"The sovereignty of God in grace gives us our only
hope of success in evangelism."*

- J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

We cannot speak of Reformed mission while avoiding the doctrine of limited atonement. Many find it uncomfortable. Sadly, even missionaries who speak of Reformed faith and confessional evangelicalism sometimes cannot accept it. Yet limited atonement does not weaken evangelism; it returns the ground and hope of evangelism to God.

The expression "limited atonement" is easily misunderstood. It may sound as though God's love were narrow or the gospel invitation should be restricted. That is not its point. The doctrine emphasizes that Christ's cross did not merely open a vague possibility of salvation, but is a definite and effective atonement that actually saves the people God chose. "Definite atonement" or "particular redemption" therefore describes it more precisely.

The question is whether Christ died on the cross for every person in exactly the same way, opening only the possibility of salvation for all. Many missionaries then say that a small human decision or act of faith is needed to turn that possibility into actual salvation. Reformed faith confesses differently. In the intention and efficacy of the atonement, Christ died for the elect and actually accomplished the salvation of the people the Father gave him. He laid down his life for "his sheep" (John 10:11-15), and his death is a work of redemption that cannot fail. The cross did not merely open a road of salvation; it accomplished God's saving plan.

Many missionaries misunderstand at this point: "Then why evangelize everyone? If Christ died for the elect, can the gospel invitation be sincere?" These are important questions, but they must not lead to the wrong conclusion. Scripture teaches both that Christ's redemption actually atones for a particular people and that the gospel must be proclaimed to everyone.

A missionary does not know who the elect are. That belongs to God's hidden will. His task is not to sort people, but to proclaim Christ sincerely and freely to all. The free offer of the gospel does not conflict with Reformed faith. Because God will certainly call his people, the missionary can boldly proclaim the gospel to everyone.

The gospel we preach is not the vague possibility, "If you believe first, Christ's death will then become meaningful to you." We proclaim the living Christ and call sinners to come to him. We say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31, ESV). The center of the gospel is not an abstract explanation of the extent of the atonement, but Christ himself, crucified and risen.

A missionary who believes limited atonement therefore does not limit evangelism. He does not preach to those who appear likely to believe and stop with those who do not. He does not judge by appearance, but proclaims Christ more actively to all. He knows the fruit does not depend on persuasion or method. Conversion is not produced by human technique, but is God's gracious work of calling and making alive by the Spirit the people chosen in Christ. This confidence makes the missionary depend more, not less, upon the Holy Spirit.

Ministers often desire quick responses on the mission field. They want more decisions and visible results, and may reduce the gospel to a choice and hurry people toward a decision. A missionary who believes limited atonement does not manipulate responses. He proclaims clearly, sincerely urges people to come to Christ in repentance and faith, and trusts that God gives new life.

This doctrine preserves the missionary's patience. Some hear for a long time without responding; some regions show almost no visible fruit for years. The missionary does not quickly conclude that his ministry has failed. Gospel fruit belongs to God's time and power. If Christ died for his people, they will certainly come to him through the gospel call. The missionary holds this promise and continues proclaiming.

A missionary who believes limited atonement therefore evangelizes everyone, sincerely invites sinners to come to Christ now, and places the fruit of conversion not in human decision or strategy, but in the grace of the triune God who actually saves his people.

Limited atonement does not close the door of mission. It breaks missionary pride, governs impatience, and returns gospel power to God. The missionary evangelizes confident that Christ's atonement cannot fail.

He does not know who the elect are, but believes Christ knows his people and calls them by sending evangelists and bringing them to hear the gospel. He therefore proclaims the glorious gospel with fear and trembling.

CHAPTER 22

The Illusion of Attractive Worship

*"The focus still seems to be on us and our activity
rather than on God and his work in Jesus Christ."*

- Michael Horton, Christless Christianity

On the mission field, worship is often used as a tool to attract people to church. This was once commonly called "seeker-sensitive worship"; today it may appear as visitor-friendly, open, or attractive worship.

Inviting people to church, softening the atmosphere so they do not feel alienated, and reducing unnecessary barriers are considered important. Such concern is not itself wrong. Missionaries must not treat unbelievers rudely or drive them away through incomprehensible language and closed forms. The church should welcome newcomers warmly.

The problem comes when the center of worship changes. In the name of consideration for unbelievers, worship can be reconstructed from the church's public response offered to God into a religious experience that makes people comfortable. If the question changes from "How should God be worshiped?" to "What do people enjoy more?" this is no longer mere consideration; it changes the nature of worship.

Worship is directed to God. Praise exalts his holy name and celebrates his works. Preaching proclaims who God is, what he has done for us, and what he requires. Prayer becomes the people's confession offered to God in dependence on his character. The Lord's Supper confirms the grace of God who established the new covenant.

Worship is therefore not designed around unbelievers. It is offered to God, and within it God responds to his people through Word and grace. Unbelievers who attend may hear the gospel and taste grace through worship offered to the unseen God and through God's Word addressed to his people.

Missionaries may need to strengthen evangelistic gatherings or introductory Bible studies for unbelievers, distinct from worship. Worship offered to God is not a performance before an audience lacking reverence for him. When unbelievers enter worship, they are invited not to a comfortable religious experience, but to stand before the living God.

This order has become blurred in many churches and mission fields. In the name of evangelism, worship becomes entertainment, while God's holiness and adoration are pushed aside. Sermons easily become

messages about rediscovering human self-esteem and potential rather than exalting Christ. Praise can change from exalting and confessing God's character into a time of emotional reassurance about how precious and loved I am.

Scripture certainly says God's people are loved by him. Believers in Christ are his children and precious to him. This is true and beautiful. Yet when misused in worship, human dignity can be treated not as a gracious standing given in God, but as independent worth possessed within humanity itself. Worship then slides from praising God's grace to confirming human self-esteem.

Human-centered songs and sermons are not merely matters of church style. They reveal the spiritual condition of the community. Where many members are unregenerate and the gospel of repentance and faith is not deeply proclaimed, the church values human security more than God's holiness. People may feel loved and respected in worship without coming to Christ in repentance and faith. They receive comfort without conviction of sin, emotion without the offense of the cross, and belonging without conversion. The church then becomes a place where people remain as they are rather than being transformed.

Pastors and missionaries must comfort broken hearts. But true comfort and restoration do not come from drawing out human potential. They come from exalting Christ. Human dignity rests in being created by God, and humanity ruined by sin is restored only in Christ. The gospel does not say, "You are already good enough." It says, "You are a sinner before God, but Christ saves sinners."

This temptation is stronger on the mission field because we do not want to lose those who have taken the difficult step of entering church. We want them to feel comfortable and receive a good impression of Christianity, so worship is adjusted to become easy and interesting. But changing its center to humanity in the name of loving unbelievers is not true love. True love helps them stand before the holy God and his Word.

Worship need not be unkind or obscure. The church can explain its order, clarify biblical language, and welcome strangers warmly. But hospitality

differs from moving the center. Hospitality lovingly leads people before God. Human-centered worship reduces God to fit human needs.

Here lies the illusion of attractive worship. When worship becomes human-centered in order to gain people, the church ultimately gains neither people nor worship. It must not lower God's glory to retain an audience. True worship does not exalt humanity, but worships God. And precisely this God-centered worship becomes the church's truest witness before the world.

PART 5

Mission Revealed through the Church

and Its Fruit



Balancing the Church's Mission

and Its Various Forms of Service

"The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship and obey Jesus Christ now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father."

- Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, What Is the Mission of the Church?

Many different ministries are conducted today under the name of mission: helping poor neighbors, providing educational opportunities, relieving suffering through medical care and counseling, and caring for the socially vulnerable. None should be treated lightly. Missionaries must not ignore real suffering, and the church must display the fruit of love and compassion in life.

Yet an important question must be asked: Is every such activity itself mission? Social and cultural activity, institutional reform, relief, and education may matter greatly without being identical to the church's essential mission. When mission is used too broadly, the purpose for which the church was sent into the world becomes blurred. Stephen Neill stated the danger briefly and forcefully:

"If everything is mission, nothing is mission."

This does not reject social service. It warns that when every good activity is indiscriminately called mission, the church's distinctive calling to proclaim the gospel and make disciples may be buried beneath countless projects. Once mission moves away from gospel proclamation and church planting, it easily becomes good social activity or religious service.

Mission is church-centered. This does not mean it is centered on church buildings or denominational expansion. It means Christ calls his people, establishes them as disciples through the Word, sacraments, and discipline, and sends them again as witnesses. The goal is not merely to increase beneficiaries or program participants, but to establish disciples who believe and follow Christ, gather them into churches, and see those churches stand as communities that bear witness to the gospel.

The Lord commanded the church to "make disciples of all nations." The command is joined to baptizing and teaching them to observe everything he commanded. Mission cannot remain individual evangelism or a one-time decision. It calls people to Christ, nurtures them within Christ's body, and establishes them as disciples who obey the Word.

The church's primary and distinctive mission is therefore not social reform itself, but proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, turning people to

God, and establishing them as disciples in the Word. The church was not instituted to solve every problem in the world. It is the community in which God calls, feeds, and establishes his people through Word and sacrament. If it loses this center, even abundant activity misses the essence of mission.

This does not mean the church should be indifferent to suffering. Believers transformed by the gospel do not ignore the poor, dismiss the pain of the oppressed, or refuse love of neighbor. The church must show mercy and do good. Yet social service does not replace the gospel; it is fruit in the lives of people transformed by it.

Problems arise when the order is reversed. Community development, education, cultural activity, and institutional reform may proceed under the name of mission while Christ's gospel and the planting of churches become secondary. People may respond to assistance before the gospel, supporters may demand visible numbers and results, and missionaries may want to prove their work through observable change. Yet improved lives do not by themselves make disciples. A cleaner village, educated children, and assisted families do not by themselves establish a church.

The church's mission is deeper. It calls sinners to Christ, nurtures them by the Word, builds them into Christ's body through baptism and the Lord's Supper, and teaches them to live according to his commands. A disciple is not simply someone who has received help, but someone who believes Christ, learns his Word, and obeys it. Mission must move toward churches in which such disciples gather to worship God and bear witness to the gospel.

Pastoral mission, professional mission, and lay mission therefore need not compete. Proclaiming the Word and establishing churches are central to the church's distinctive calling. At the same time, God sends believers with varied gifts and vocations into the world to display gospel fruit in every sphere. Doctors care for patients, teachers teach, businesspeople work honestly, and believers serve neighbors. Such service cannot replace gospel proclamation and discipleship; it should be understood as fruit flowing from lives transformed by the gospel.

Missionaries must respect varied ministries without losing the center. Relief is important but cannot replace the gospel. Education is necessary but cannot replace discipleship. Social change is precious but is not identical to church planting. The church must do good in the world, but its essential mission is to proclaim Christ's gospel and establish Christ's people.

The varied works of mission do not compete, but they do not all possess the same center. The center is always Christ and his church. True mission is not social activity that bypasses the church. It is God's work in which Christ calls his people, establishes them within the church, and sends them again into the world. Preserving this order keeps the church's mission and its varied service in balance.

CHAPTER 24

Neighbors to Love

Before They Are Objects of Evangelism

*"Our calling as Christians is not to love God's elect,
and them only, but to love our neighbour,
irrespective of whether he is elect or not."*

- J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

On the mission field, people are easily classified as "objects of evangelism." We judge who is open to the gospel, likely to attend church, or likely to become ministry fruit. Discernment is necessary, but it can become an attitude that evaluates people as ministry possibilities rather than neighbors to love.

When I began migrant ministry in a multicultural church in Korea in 2011, I tried many approaches to evangelism. I offered Korean classes, helped with medical and unpaid-wage problems, arranged outings and events, and invited people to church. A question often arose: Should I continue caring even for those who only received benefits without attending, or focus on those who responded spiritually? From the standpoint of efficiency, the latter always appeared more reasonable.

As ministry continued, one truth became clearer: the Great Commission cannot be separated from the command to love. The Lord commanded us to make disciples of all nations and also to love our neighbor. Christ died for us while we were still sinners. That grace was not conditional favor given only on the expectation that we would convert.

The same conflict appeared in children's ministry. Some children respond well to the Word, sing eagerly, and participate actively. It is natural to feel drawn to them and give them more attention. Restless children who do not listen or show little change after a long time are easily pushed aside. Yet we do not know whom God will call. As far as possible, missionaries should lay aside prejudice and care also for slow, isolated children.

We must guard against a purely goal-oriented attitude: treating people well if they seem likely to believe and dismissing them early if they do not. It may look strategic, but it uses people as means to ministry results. Missionaries sometimes believe they should invest first in the most intelligent and committed young people. The Lord did not treat us this way. Christ patiently endured slow-learning disciples and gave his life for us while we were enemies.

This does not mean a missionary can invest the same time and strength in everyone. Wise priorities are needed. But setting priorities differs from dismissing someone from the heart. Even when we cannot meet someone

often, our posture should remain prayer and compassion rather than cynicism or surrender. Although a person may not become immediate ministry fruit, he bears God's image and is a neighbor we must love.

Even when someone appears indifferent to the gospel, the missionary does not judge carelessly. He greets a stubborn person kindly, meets a person who broke a promise without calculating the earlier disappointment, and serves someone in need as far as he can. This is not an evangelistic technique, but the way a gospel-transformed person lives before a neighbor.

Pressure for results always exists on the mission field. We must report to supporters, explain fruit, and see evidence that our work is not in vain. The heart then gravitates toward responsive people and calls this God's work, while those who resist are treated as people from whom we should "shake off the dust." That saying must not become an easy excuse for abandoning people. God's kingdom is not built by efficiency.

God chooses what is foolish in the world to shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). Someone who appears dull and without possibility may be transformed and raised as the Lord's worker. We must remember the Lord's words that "many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30, ESV).

Mission is not a calculation of maximum efficiency in gaining people. Measured only by efficiency, Christ's patience and self-sacrifice would look wasteful. But the gospel overturns human calculation. The Great Commission cannot be separated from love of neighbor, and it belongs with the Lord's words at the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan: "You go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37, ESV). A missionary must not see people only as objects of evangelism, but first become their neighbor.

CHAPTER 25

The Church's Spiritual Obesity

and the Fruit of Distorted Mission

*"God is the gospel, not money, not health, not
family."*

- John Piper, "God Is the Gospel"

The Korean church does not lack spiritual resources. Sermons abound; lectures and testimonies continually appear online; books, seminars, and conferences are easily available. Yet abundant food does not make a body healthy. What is eaten matters. Good food brings health, while sweet and stimulating food makes the body sick.

Much unhealthy spiritual food is offered indiscriminately in the church today. Some messages place solutions to my problems before knowing God, emphasize comfort over repentance, and speak more loudly of blessing than of the cross. They attract people easily by promising peace to the anxious, success to those who failed, and quick solutions to those who suffer.

Such faith makes the church spiritually obese. People hear much but do not obey, speak of grace but do not repent, seek blessing but refuse to take up the cross. Religious life may appear abundant outwardly, but if that abundance does not lead to reverence and obedience, it may be overconsumption rather than health.

The problem is that this condition is carried directly onto the mission field. Churches accustomed to prosperity preaching easily expect similar fruit abroad. Results-oriented churches demand visible outcomes in mission reports: how many gathered, decided, what answers and testimonies occurred, and whether there are photographs. Reports can become channels of shared thanksgiving, but when they become the standard, missionaries want to produce results that meet expectations.

Patterns seen in the Korean church are then repeated abroad. Local people come hoping illness will be healed, children prosper, financial problems resolve, and family difficulties disappear. Missionaries cannot ignore their pain. But when meeting these needs becomes central, the church is increasingly seen as a place to gain blessing and solve problems. Sermons speak more of comfort, success, healing, and answers than of sin, repentance, and Christ's lordship.

Imagine a mission church that distributes food every week, gives scholarships to children, and pays medical expenses. At first this becomes a good point of contact. People open their hearts and attend worship.

There are photographs for supporters and grateful testimonies. Everyone may feel there is fruit.

But what if, even with time, people never move toward learning and obeying the Word and remain only to receive assistance? Fearing their departure, the missionary prepares more help, while sermons easily move in a direction that does not challenge their expectations. The church eventually becomes an institution managing needs rather than a community making disciples.

Such ministry appears successful. People gather, stories can be shared, and supporters see encouraging scenes. Yet deep problems emerge with time. Believers continue demanding care without learning to hold fast to the Word and serve others. The church and ministers remain busy maintaining them, while the community fails to proclaim the gospel and plant another church.

Missionaries must not ignore real need. Feeding the hungry, helping the sick, and addressing the suffering of the oppressed cannot be dismissed as secondary. Even so, meeting needs must not replace the gospel. Assistance can open a door, but what enters through it must be the gospel of Jesus Christ, not a message that satisfies human desire.

The distortion of mission does not begin only on the field. It begins in the spiritual condition of the sending church. If the Korean church is trained in prosperity and results-centered faith, it is likely to reproduce the same ministry and churches abroad. Missionaries must resist this current. They must value the local church's health above immediate reports, care for human needs, and proclaim Christ beyond those needs.

Missionaries must keep local churches from remaining consumer communities that only receive care. They must teach those who gathered for blessing to become worshipers of God, those seeking solutions to become disciples who bear the cross, and those receiving help to grow into witnesses who serve others. This is the road beyond spiritual obesity toward a healthy church and the correction of distorted missionary fruit.

Longing for God's Glory and Revival

Reflecting on the Ministry of David Brainerd

*"God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen,
but by its being rejoiced in."*

- Jonathan Edwards, "Miscellanies," No. 448, in The Works of Jonathan Edwards

Mission begins neither with human need nor ministry success, but with longing for God's glory. Its center must be the desire that God be revealed as God and that his majesty and rule be acknowledged in people's hearts and lives. When this longing disappears, ministry may continue, but it ultimately leaves human traces while obscuring God.

God's glory does not end with being displayed in an event. As Jonathan Edwards said, God is glorified not only when his glory is seen, but when people rejoice in it. The true fruit of mission is therefore not merely hearing about God, but knowing and delighting in him as God and coming under his rule. Attitudes toward sin change, the center of life moves, and individuals and communities cease to be their own masters and stand under God's reign.

Such change is not produced by emotional excitement or a temporary atmosphere. It is God's work upon truth. Martyn Lloyd-Jones warned that when expecting revival, right doctrine can never be treated lightly:

"These doctrines are essential. Without them I see that we have no right whatsoever to pray for, or expect, the influence and manifestation of God the Holy Spirit." (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Defective Orthodoxy")

Mission today must recover this order. Revival does not bypass truth, and the Spirit does not work apart from the Word. If missionaries long for God's glory and revival, they must first hold not to programs or atmosphere, but to the proclamation of truth. Sin and grace, the cross and resurrection, atonement and election, God's sovereignty and Christ's kingship must be declared clearly and repeatedly at the center of mission.

This becomes clear in the diary of David Brainerd, the eighteenth-century missionary to Native Americans. The revival he experienced was not the result of atmosphere or an event. It was God's sovereign work upon the doctrines of salvation Brainerd persistently proclaimed.

Before spiritual awakening came, Brainerd taught the people for a long time about sin and the human condition.

"They seemed to know nothing of their own hearts and to be entirely unacquainted with the doctrines of grace." (David Brainerd, Diary, Aug. 24, 1745)

Brainerd believed that unless this ignorance was removed, no emotional response could lead to true conversion. He did not avoid truths revealing the root of sin and human inability to save oneself. He did not make sin light in order to win people, but first spoke of human misery and then proclaimed Christ's atonement to those who came to recognize that misery.

"I spoke of the love and compassion of God in sending his Son to suffer for the sins of men." (Aug. 6, 1745)

"I endeavored to explain that God gave his Son for the redemption of fallen creatures, to satisfy divine justice in their place." (Mar. 23, 1746)

He recorded the moment when God worked in this way:

"They were deeply convinced of their sinful and perishing condition." (Aug. 3, 1745)

"I preached from Isaiah 53:3-10. The Word was attended with remarkable power, and great spiritual concern arose among the congregation." (Aug. 7, 1745)

Their response was not merely emotional. It was deep contrition over sin produced by the Holy Spirit.

"Two among them were newly awakened to a sense of their sin and misery, and several elderly people wept and cried aloud in distress of soul." (Aug. 16, 1745)

Brainerd did not record this merely as a successful meeting. Even in the midst of revival, he did not treat truth lightly, but examined the people's faith.

"I conversed with those who had lately received comfort, examined the grounds of it, and sought to give them the instruction, caution, and direction they needed." (Aug. 9, 1745)

Missionaries today should take this posture deeply to heart. A response from people must not be praised indiscriminately as though it were necessarily the Spirit's work. True revival is not separated from truth, and true comfort must be given through Christ's gospel to those who have adequately faced sin.

In the midst of revival, Brainerd clearly witnessed and confessed God's sovereignty:

"God appeared to work entirely alone, leaving no room to attribute any part of the work to the power of the creature." (Aug. 16, 1745)

"I have rarely seen so clearly as on this day that the conversion of souls is the work of God. I could not change them; I could only speak to the dry bones." (Aug. 28, 1746)

This is the mark of true revival: not a result planned and manipulated by people, but one God produces through his Word. Brainerd did not trust his strategy. He watched the work God alone began and accomplished.

"The concern of my soul was not merely for souls themselves, but that Christ's kingdom might appear in the world and that God might be known as God throughout all the earth." (Dec. 20, 1743)

Mission that longs for God's glory and revival always returns to the proclamation of truth: teaching sin adequately, repeatedly proclaiming the atonement, and trusting and waiting upon God's sovereignty. It does not minimize sin out of fear that people will leave, omit sovereignty and election to avoid discomfort, or call a brief event and immediate response revival.

The community we dream of is not one that merely enjoys comfortable religious life. It fights sin, refuses compromise with worldly values, and lives worthily of the gospel. It chooses holiness over comfort and faithfulness over success. Such a community may not achieve striking outward growth, yet clear change appears within it. Lives change, relationships are renewed, and through the church's presence the surrounding community becomes conscious of God.

This is what mission ultimately desires: ministry that reveals God rather than people, not temporary emotion but change in which God's reign actually comes. Brainerd's diary still asks us: What are we expecting? Are we expecting God to work, or merely people to respond?

Conclusion

Whom Does Mission Ultimately Reveal?

We have considered many things about mission: conversion and revival, the cross and the gospel, the nature of the church and the place of ministry, and the missionary's own life. After all these discussions, one question remains.

Whom does mission ultimately reveal?

Mission is not simply the work of changing people. It must be a place where God is revealed. The moment humanity takes the center, missionary work may still do many things while obscuring God. By contrast, mission centered on God does not lose its direction even when it appears outwardly small.

We often understand mission through results and are reassured or shaken by numbers, responses, atmosphere, and expansion. Scripture leaves somewhat different questions: Was God revealed? Was Christ's cross at the center? Were people brought to stand before God? These are not questions we can pass over easily.

Mission does not prove our zeal; it reveals who God is. It is therefore sometimes uncomfortable. We must speak of sin, call for repentance, and bring people down from the place where they stand at the center. Yet it is precisely there that God reveals his glory.

And so we ask again.

What am I expecting?

Am I expecting people to gather,

or am I expecting God to be revealed?

What am I afraid of?

Am I afraid that people will leave,

or am I afraid that God will be obscured?

Before these are questions for missionaries, they are questions for everyone who stands before God.

Mission may not be the work of only a special group of people. Anyone who knows God cannot live without revealing him. Mission may therefore begin not with a program, but at the center of a person's heart.

Where God becomes the center again, mission begins quietly. And that mission will reveal God rather than people. I hope these reflections offer a small opportunity to return together to that place.

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