

Unrivaled Christ, Unstoppable Gospel,  
Unreached Peoples, Unending Joy

CROSS

JOHN PIPER AND DAVID MATHIS, GENERAL EDITORS

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## INTRODUCTION

# Beautiful Feet

David Mathis

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness.*

(Isa. 52:7)

What would it sound like to receive an invitation from the most important person alive, to join him in the most important venture on the planet?

Perhaps he would reference what he's done in the past, and how it connects with this initiative—that he “became a servant” in the incarnation, not only “to show God’s truthfulness” and “confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,” but also “that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Rom. 15:8–9).

Maybe he would outline the mission and pledge its fulfillment: “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Likely such a personage would make unblushing promises of reward, despite the drawbacks: “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life” (Mark 10:28–30).

He may even be so bold as to say, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:34–35). The venture would be so significant (and no doubt, the attendant cost is so great) that it might sound off-putting at first—until the pledge sinks in, and you realize how “inescapably hedonistic”<sup>1</sup> such an offer is.

Given his inherited resources and his own acquired power, he may let you know that finishing the task is not just likely, but absolutely certain. “This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14).

And if the invitation were authentic, he may even divulge the extent of his authority, under which the endeavor will operate (“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”), give specific instructions for the mission (“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”), and promise not just his oversight and support, but his own presence and intimate involvement (“Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age,” [Matt. 28:18–20]).

## **One Commission, Two Callings**

The reality, of course, is that *you are invited*—in all the above terms and many more biblical overtures bursting with missionary vision.

You are invited to be involved in the world's greatest initiative, to participate in the planet's biggest project, and to engage in history's most exciting enterprise. Already the decisive act has been accomplished when the Son of God himself gave his own life on a hill outside Jerusalem to secure the salvation of his people from all the peoples, and rose again victorious over sin, death, and hell. Now he leads the mission from the control room of the universe, at his Father's right hand, and by his Spirit, through his own people, he is extending his offer of life to every tribe, tongue, and nation.

This summons to wear the jersey and come onto the field with the globe's greatest team is singular and plural. Our star has only one team. All who answer his call wear the same blood-red, and don his unmistakable logo. But you may say he calls us to various positions on two distinct sides of the ball. Some he has sent to make disciples among peoples already "reached" in societies where churches already exist and pathways to his message are accessible. "Reached" doesn't mean everyone believes, or even that many believe. And it doesn't mean that the work isn't important, even essential, to his Commission. But it is fundamentally distinct from the calling he gives to others: to make disciples among the "unreached."

There is a fundamental difference: some of us complete the Commission among "reached peoples," and some of us do so among the "unreached," or even "unengaged."

## **Pursue All the Peoples**

*People groups* are communities or societies of persons and families with a shared language and common ethnic identity. An *unreached* people, as mission strategists commonly use the term, is a group with no indigenous Christian community, or Christians so few in number (and without adequate resources) that they are unlikely to ably plant the gospel and the church among their people.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, an

*unengaged* people is one in which no known church-planting effort is currently active.<sup>3</sup>

*Missions*, then, is a term for preserving a category for the church's evangelistic efforts to reach the unreached and engage the unengaged. Taking the gospel across the street and to one's own friends and family and coworkers and associates is vital. This is the work of local mission, which we often call *evangelism*—or if that word carries too much baggage, call it living and speaking *on mission* among reached peoples. But among the two callings of the Great Commission—one to disciple the reached and one the unreached—just about all the inertia in our lives and churches and communities is toward the first calling, not the second. We have no present concern in the church that too many Christians will up and move to unreached. The reached are relatively well engaged, even as great needs persist among the reached, but the unreached are in even more dire straits. *Missions* is a term for noting that difference and preserving the church's category for planting the gospel among peoples not yet reached.

## Call to the Millennials

The origin of this book was in the inaugural Cross student missions conference in Louisville, Kentucky, December 27–30, 2013. The conference was a fresh effort to call college students from among the emerging Millennial generation (born 1980–2000) to the gospel frontiers for, perhaps, the last great push in the completion of the Commission.

It may sound daunting to learn that 6,500–7,000 of the world's people groups are unreached (and more than 40 percent of those are presently unengaged), but it's also deeply encouraging to put these figures into context, and see that “the momentum of closure is accelerating.”<sup>4</sup> As missiologist Patrick Johnstone wrote more than a decade ago, “Although many people are still unreached, the number

is only a fraction of that of 100 years ago. The goal is attainable in our generation—if we mobilize in prayer and effort and work together to disciple the remaining least reached peoples.”<sup>5</sup>

*Cross* is one such effort to mobilize prayer and partner together in summoning a new generation not just to live on mission among our native reached peoples, and be engaged “senders,” but also to be sent to the unreached and unengaged, and take up the “going” that the Commission requires. *Cross* aims to fly the flag for the frontier and wave the banner for *missions* and the irreplaceable, and beautiful, work of crossing cultures and learning languages to plant the gospel among those who otherwise have no access.<sup>6</sup>

## Feet Still Matter

But to the rising generation, “going” anywhere may seem as easy, in one sense, and as unimportant as ever. In an age of increasing globalization and rapid technological advance, in which we can virtually “go” anywhere and see anything with a smart phone, a fresh localism is on the rise, and for good reason. For most of us, at least in the United States, nationalism is too big, and too disparate, to capture us for what we’re missing in the Internet Age. Now we must seize upon that which is local to balance out the place-lessness we feel at work and in our social (media) lives.

But when it comes to *missions* and completing the Global Cause, feet are as important as they’ve ever been. Where you put your feet matters as much today as ever. With our flurry of innovations, it’s easy to suppose there must be all sorts of ways in which the labor of disciplinmaking, that once demanded that we be onsite, now can be done remotely. No doubt, there are a host of gains and potential assets such an age brings to world evangelization and theological education. But the computer will never replace the missionary—because

the Commission doesn't call for mere exchange of information, but for good old-fashioned discipling.

Discipling the nations requires more than dropping a translated tract or piping in a recording, or even a well-produced video. Discipling requires more than a low-bandwidth, user-friendly website in multiple trade languages. Discipling means getting your feet wet, and your whole body, in baptism, and teaching not just what Jesus commanded, but to *observe* all that he commanded (Matt. 28:19). It means doing the long-term grunt work to entrust the gospel to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2). It means older women training younger women holistically (Titus 2:3–5). It means being “among” the people we hope to reach with the gentleness of a nursing mother and the strength of an encouraging father (1 Thess. 2:7, 11–12). It means an eagerness to share not only the gospel, but our own selves (1 Thess. 2:8), providing a life example to imitate (Phil. 3:17), and empowering the disciples to practice what they have learned and received and heard and seen in us (Phil. 4:9). Full-orbed discipling cannot be accomplished remotely. It won't happen over the Internet.

And so, still at the very heart of missions is where you put your feet. Sure, there is more involved in cross-cultural missions than mere geography, but there is always some geography. There is some shared footspace. There is no discipling by proxy, no distance option for finishing the mission. There is language to learn and dialects to discern and customs with which to become acquainted. And while modern transportation, unprecedented migration, and increasing globalization may make geography less a barrier than ever before, that doesn't mean that it's not still a significant barrier, and that we downplay the importance of location to our own loss and the compromise of Commission.

*Disciple* is Jesus' central command in Matthew 28:18–20, but *going* is inextricably linked to discipling in this context. Isaiah 52:7,

quoted so memorably in Romans 10:15, is still as relevant as ever: “How beautiful are the feet of him who brings good news!” Perhaps even more so when we’re faced with the location-minimizing temptations we are today. The feet of those who leave behind family and friends and familiarity to adapt to language and custom *and place* are still the most beautiful feet in the world—because they echo the journey of the nail-scarred feet that left behind heaven’s everything to come to us in our nothing.

## **We Are Turning to the Nations**

There comes a moment in every movement of God when continuing to saturate one’s native people with the gospel is simply no longer enough. This is true of many in our day, who have enjoyed renewal in the fresh wave of gospel-centeredness and new depth in the soil of Reformed theology. But as the movement has grown and deepened and matured, we’ve increasingly felt the power of God’s words through Isaiah,

“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” (Isa. 49:6)

It’s not enough just to make more young, restless Reformed types among our already reached people. It is “too light a thing,” as Isaiah would say, to see biblical substance and depth make a resurgence among conservative evangelicals. This vision of God is too big for a tribal deity. The God of the Scriptures is a God of the nations. The very message of such a big, gracious God is called into question if we are not soon turning to the nations.

More than one hundred years ago, in 1888, it was too small a thing for Robert Wilder and his companions at Princeton. God called them out from New England, and from the United States, to take the gospel to the unevangelized. The Student Volunteer Movement of which they became a part, sent out more than twenty thousand students in its short history.

Some eight decades before them, it was too light a thing for the renewal of the Second Great Awakening (roughly 1790–1840) to be contained among already reached peoples. In August 1806, Samuel Mills and fellow students of Williams College experienced the so-called “Haystack Meeting” that stirred them, and soon others, for missions, including Adoniram Judson (1788–1850), who left for Burma in early 1812.

Mills, in turn, had been inspired by William Carey (1761–1834), who is known as the father of modern missions and had felt the same restlessness and eventual call to turn to the unreached peoples beyond his homeland. For Carey it was too light a thing that God would only reach England. Now, said Carey in effect, we are turning to the nations.

But perhaps the most moving turn to the nations came in Acts 13. There Paul and his companions came to Antioch in Pisidia, and as was his practice, Paul began by evangelizing the “reached” people of the day, his fellow Jews in the synagogue. After his first message, they wanted to hear more—“the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath” (Acts 13:42). But the mood changed the next week when “the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord” (Acts 13:44).

See if you can put yourself in the setting as a Gentile. Jew and Gentile have gathered to hear this remarkable news brought to the Jewish people. These are “things into which angels long to look” (1 Pet. 1:12), and the Gentiles stand with the angels, looking in from the outside. What an amazing thing God has done for the Jews.

When the Jewish leaders see the crowds Paul had attracted, “they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him” (Acts 13:45). To which Paul and Barnabas respond with this amazing statement—this turning to offer the grace of the gospel to “unclean” Gentiles. Imagine standing among your fellow Gentiles and hearing his extraordinary message of salvation, peering in from the outside on what God was offering the Jews, and then seeing Paul turn and extend this invitation to you.

Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly [to the Jewish leaders], saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:46–48)

*Behold, we are turning to the nations.* It is too light a thing for God merely to raise up the tribes of Israel. It is too light a thing to produce a second Great Awakening at the beginning of the nineteenth century and bring renewal to America. And it is too light a thing to usher in a resurgence of big-God theology among Western evangelicals in the early twenty-first century. We are turning to the nations. The salvation of this global God must be offered to the ends of the earth.

And so comes the missions moment, that glorious pivot when we realize that the initial thrust of the movement has run its course, and it is time to truly go global with the grace we’ve received. When people take the Word of God seriously, there is revival among the reached and missions to the unreached. Send out the beautiful feet.

## Be a World Christian

In the chapters that follow, you will be summoned, again and again, to consider the missionary call to the unreached and unengaged. We expect that many of you reading this book already embrace this call, or have begun to sense it. But what follows in these pages is not only for current and future missionaries, but for the whole church, because this Great Commission is a venture we share in together. Yes, there are two distinct callings, but there is one team, one Lord, one Great Commission. So we pray that God would use this book to solidify your current season in life, or to open new vistas on your next, and we invite you to “world Christianity”—which is really the only Christianity.

For many, we hope that will mean embracing the beautiful calling to cross cultures to bring the gospel to a people group that otherwise has no access. For others, that will mean becoming or reinforcing what it means to be an engaged *sender*—one who not only sees his own life among his native people as *sent* for evangelism, but also is actively involved in the financial and prayer support of *sending* and sustaining missionaries to the unreached.

Becoming a world Christian means that, wherever you live, you “consider all other citizenship a secondary matter”<sup>7</sup> and “reorder your life around God’s global cause.”<sup>8</sup> It means that even as you give yourself to making disciples on the tract of land to which you’ve been sent, you connect your efforts with the Global Cause, among peoples reached and unreached, and you pray and dream and give toward completing the task.

But becoming a world Christian not only leads to the resourcing and flourishing of ministries abroad; it also leads to vibrancy and fruit at home. “Becoming a world Christian cannot be an end in itself,” writes Don Carson. “The aim is not to become so international and culturally flexible that one does *not* fit in anywhere; the

aim, rather, is to become so understanding and flexible that one *can* soon fit in and further the gospel anywhere.”<sup>9</sup>

## **Christ, Gospel, Peoples, Joy**

In the chapters that follow, we will hear from a rich cross-selection of Christian leaders and missionaries. There’s a Korean, a Canadian, a Zambian, some Americans, and one Malaysian-born Chinese Aussie. We have Baptists and Presbyterians, a pastor from Texas and one from Africa, and two authors of more than fifty books. There’s a CEO, a university chaplain, a world-class theologian, and a seminary chancellor. We have two international college ministry leaders, one former high school basketball coach, one former mining engineer, and a former Muslim. In addition to the United States, members from our team live in Japan, Zambia, Australia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Let me warn you, and entice you, that this missions book has a lot to say about Jesus and his gospel. We do not assume the gospel and then invest our energies into statistical observations and brainstorming about strategies. We glory in the gospel, and believe that it will be men and women who glory daily in the gospel who will be most powerful in finishing the mission.

The chapters ahead will call you over and over to consider God’s call in the Global Cause and to cross the line. What is he doing in and through you in the moments invested in the truths rehearsed in these chapters? Is he steadying the work of your hands on the field? Summoning you to cross over into some new venture? Inspiring you to cross from local Christian to world Christian, to take up the flag in your church for the unreached? Daring you to dream big and cross the line into the next season of your life for engaging the unengaged with the gospel? These contributors won’t let you go until you’ve considered your calling afresh and you’re ready to “go back to your

life,” if you go back, with renewed vigor and purpose. Or until you’ve resolved to be caught up into crossing the street, or crossing a border, or crossing an ocean, or crossing a culture in the call of the Commission.

The invitation is for real. Jesus will build his church; the gates of hell will not prevail against her (Matt. 16:18). The most important person alive has summoned you into the most important venture on the planet. Will you cross?

## CHAPTER 1

# The Chief End of Missions

*The Supremacy of God  
in the Joy of All Peoples*

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John Piper

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**T**he Cross student missions conference, and now this book inspired by it, is a dream come true for me. And my prayer is that many of you will look back some day and see that the content captured here became a decisive moment in a dream come true for you—that some day, ten or twenty or thirty years from now, you will recall the very first Cross conference, or a word in one of these chapters, as a turning point when God did something decisive in directing the rest of your life. If you come to this book with low expectations, get big ones right now.

### **A Dream Come True**

There are at least four reasons why first the conference, and now this book, is a dream come true for me.

1. God created the world and has been active in it from the beginning so that the transcendent beauty of his holiness might be known and enjoyed and shared by a redeemed people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and this book is God's work to propel that purpose toward completion. To be a part of something so central to God's ultimate purpose is what I dream about for my life.

2. The Cross conference and this book are a dream come true because every human being on this planet is lost and bound for eternal suffering unless they come to know and treasure Jesus Christ and the good news that God sent him into the world to die, and in dying to absorb and remove that judgment for everyone who believes. And the conference and this book exist to make that global human lostness—that impending eternal suffering—shockingly clear, and then propel to all the unreached peoples of the world an army of lovers who care about all human suffering, especially eternal suffering.

3. Third, the conference and book are a dream come true for me because in my lifetime God has brought about a great awakening to the glory of his sovereign grace. Call it Reformed theology. Call it the doctrines of grace. Call it the new Calvinism. Call it Big God theology. Call it a passion for God's supremacy in all things. Call it the resurgence of God-centered, Christ-exalting, Bible-saturated worship. Call it a vision of a great, holy, just, wise, good, gracious, sovereign God whose throne is established in the heavens and who does whatever he pleases. Call it what you will. God is doing this—God is awakening millions of people all over the world, especially young people—to these stunning and glorious realities. And this book is a fruit of this awakening. It is the sharpening and the pushing of the point of the spear of this gospel truth into the unreached peoples of the world, as John Stott said, “for His Imperial Majesty of Jesus Christ and for the glory of his empire.”

4. Fourth, this book is a dream come true for me because I am old and I suspect that most of the readers will be young. Most of

my heroes died before they were my age—Calvin, Luther, Tyndale, Owen, Spurgeon, Edwards, Brainerd, Judson—all dead before they were sixty-seven. They didn't have this privilege at my age. Ever since God did an unusual awakening in me in 1983, when I was thirty-seven years old, I have wanted my life to count for the sake of the unreached peoples of the world. The rising of the Cross conference for students feels like a crowning gift from God—like an answer to the prayer of Psalm 71:18, “Even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation.” God is mighty, young people. Unstoppably mighty. He will have the nations. He will have his world.

And now I get the privilege of talking to you about him under the title: “The Chief End of Missions: The Supremacy of God in the Joy of All Peoples.” So this is all a dream come true. And I pray again that many of you will look back some day and see that this was the beginning of a dream come true for you. Or perhaps not the beginning but a decisive milestone, making plain what God has been doing in your life all along.

## Explaining the Title

You may hear in my title a paraphrase of the first question in the Westminster Catechism:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

So I have replaced “chief end of man” with “chief end of missions”—which seems legitimate because missions is shorthand for “man active in doing missions.” There are no missions in the abstract without human action. There are only people doing missions. What is their chief end or goal? Or, what is God's chief end in their action?

Then I changed “the glory of God” to “the supremacy of God.” The chief end of missions is the exaltation of God as *supremely* glorious—*supremely* beautiful and valuable above all other reality. The chief end of missions is the radical transformation of human hearts through faith in Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit so that they treasure and magnify the glory of God *supremely* above all things. In that sense, the end of missions is the *supremacy* of God.

Then I changed “and enjoy him forever” to “the joy of all peoples.” Missions is not just about winning your *neighbor* to Christ. It is about the *peoples* of the world. “Let the *peoples* praise you, O God; let all the *peoples* praise you!” (Ps. 67:3).

So the chief end of missions is *the glorification of God’s supremacy in the jubilation of human hearts among all the peoples of the world*. Or we could say: the chief end of missions is the supremacy of God in the satisfaction of the peoples in God. Or, the chief end of missions is the glory of God in the God-centered gladness of the peoples.

### *Most Important: Changing “And” to “In”*

But the most important change I made in the catechism was changing the word *and* to the word *in*. The catechism says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, *and* to enjoy him forever.” What does *and* mean? If *and* means that there is one end of man called “glorify God,” and another end of man called “enjoy him forever,” then why did the authors of the catechism use the singular *end* when they answered, “The chief *end* of man is . . .”? Why didn’t they say, “The chiefs *ends* of man *are* to glorify God and enjoy him forever”?

The answer is that the authors did *not* consider God’s getting glory in man and man’s getting joy in God as separate and distinct *ends*. They knew that God’s being glorified in us and our being satisfied in him were one thing.

One thing—the way God looking stunning through me is one thing with my being stunned by him. He looks stunning *in* my being stunned. God’s being glorified and my enjoying him is one thing the way God looking ravishing is one thing with my being ravished. God’s being glorified and my enjoying him are one thing the way God looking like the supreme treasure over all is one thing with my treasuring him as the supreme treasure over all. The world sees the supreme value of God in our valuing him supremely.

Those great Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century knew that God’s being glorified in us and our being satisfied in him were not two separate goals of creation. They were one goal, one end. And so they wrote, “The chief *end* (not ends) of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” And what I am doing is simply making it explicit and clear *how* they are one in my paraphrase: “The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *in* the joy of all peoples”—namely, the joy of all peoples in God.

When the peoples of the earth come to rejoice supremely in the Lord, the Lord will be supremely glorified in the peoples of the earth. There is one end, one aim, one goal, of missions: the full and everlasting gladness of the peoples in the glory of God. Or, the glorification of God in the full and everlasting gladness of the peoples in God.

What does this most important change from “and” to “in” imply for your motivation in missions? The change from “The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *and* the joy of all peoples” to “The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *in* the joy of all peoples”—why does that matter for you? For your motivation in reading this book? For being open to God’s leading in your life in regard to the unreached peoples of the world?

The reason it matters is because this change (from “and” to “in”) clarifies the relationship between the two great biblical motivations for doing missions: the joy you have in *seeing God glorified*, and the

joy you have in *seeing people saved*—passion for the supremacy of God and compassion for perishing people.

Which do you have? Which is driving you? God's glory or man's good? God's worth or man's rescue? God's holiness or man's happiness? The exaltation of God's supremacy or the salvation of man's soul? What is your driving missions motivation?

### *Why the Change Matters*

The main reason it matters that I have changed “the supremacy of God *and* the joy of all peoples” to “the supremacy of God *in* the joy of all peoples,” is that this makes it clear you don't have to choose between those two motives. In fact, you dare not choose. If you choose between them, both are cancelled. They live and die together. Rightly understood these two motives are one and not two.

When we say, “The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *in* the joy of all peoples,” we make plain that zeal for the supremacy of God *includes* a zeal for the joy of all peoples. And the other way around, compassion on the joyless eternity of lost peoples *includes* a zeal for the glory of God. Rightly understood, it cannot be otherwise.

These are not separate motives, as if missions could be pursued with a zeal for the glory of God, but no zeal for the joy of lost people! Or as if missions could be pursued with a zeal for the joy of the lost, but no zeal for the glory of God. No, that's not possible. Indifference to the glorification of God *is* indifference to the eternal joy of the peoples. Indifference to the eternal joy of the peoples is indifference to the glory of God. Because missions aims at the supremacy of God *in* the joy of all peoples—the joy of the peoples *in* God.

To be sure, not all people will be saved. Not all will enjoy God forever. Many will hate him to eternity. And God will glorify his holy wrath in their righteous judgment. But that is *not* the goal of

missions. Missions is a rescue movement to glorify God in the gladness of the peoples.

These are not two separate motives. They are one. “The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *in*—not *and*—the joy of all peoples.” You don’t have to answer the question, “Which is driving you? God’s glory or man’s good? God’s worth or man’s rescue? God’s holiness or man’s happiness? The exaltation of God’s supremacy or the salvation of man’s soul?”

Stated like that, there is no right answer to that question. This *or* that. No. Not: this *or* that; but: this *in* that. Not “God’s glory *or* man’s joy”; but: “God’s glory revealed *in* man’s joy”—man’s joy *in* God. Not: God’s worth *or* man’s rescue; but God’s worth revealed *in* man’s rescue—his rescue from the deadly condition of not treasuring God’s worth. God’s worth is magnified when a person flees from a lifetime of belittling God’s worth.

So you dare not choose between being motivated by your compassion for lost people and your zeal for the glory of God. If you know what the glory of God is, and you know what it means to be rescued from sin, then you will know that you must have *both* motives because they are one. The glory of God in the gladness of the peoples, and the gladness of the peoples in the glory of God.

## **The Bible’s Pervasive Message: God’s Glory**

Let’s go to the Bible now and see if these things are so. Perhaps here is where the Holy Spirit will put the match to the kindling I am trying to lay.

The uniform and pervasive message of the Bible is that all things have been done *by God* for the glory of God, and all things should, therefore, be done *by us* for the glory of God. This doesn’t mean we do them to *increase* his glory, but to *display* his glory. To *communicate* his glory—the supreme beauty of his manifold perfections.

The apostle Paul comes to the end of the great explanation of redemptive history in Romans 9–11 and writes in Romans 11:36, “From him and through him and *to him* are all things. *To him* be glory forever.”

“*To him* are all things.” All things exist to him, that is, to his honor, to his fame, for the sake of his name and his praise. All things—absolutely all things, from microwave ovens to global missions, from the tiniest microbe to human cultures, all things are “to him.” To him be glory forever. All the peoples, all the languages, all the tribes are *to him*. They exist for him. His name, his praise, his honor, his glory.

Paul says again in Colossians 1:16, “All things were created through him and *for him*,” referring to Christ. Everything in creation exists *for him*. For the honor of Christ, for the glory of Christ. For the name and the fame of Christ (cf. Heb. 2:10).

Or again in Romans 1:5, Paul says, “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith *for the sake of [Christ’s] name* among all the nations.” “For the sake of Christ’s name.” Paul’s apostleship, and by extension the cause of missions, and this conference, exist “for the sake of Christ’s name among all the nations.” For the name and honor and glory and fame of Jesus Christ.

This is where John Stott says in his commentary on Romans that the mission of the church exists “for His Imperial Majesty, Jesus Christ, and for the glory of his empire.” For all we know, America may be a footnote in the history of the world someday, and every President virtually forgotten, just like the Caesars of Rome—how many Caesars can you name? (There were eighty.) But we know beyond all doubt that the name and the majesty and the kingdom of Christ, in the words of Daniel the prophet, “shall never be destroyed. . . . It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

The point of all these texts—and dozens more like them—is that God’s aim in creation is to put himself on display and to magnify the greatness of his glory. “The heavens are telling of the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1 *NASB*). He designed it that way. That is what the galaxies are for. And that is what everything that happens in creation is for. All of history, from creation to consummation, exists for the communication of the glory of God.

Isaiah 48:9–11 flies like a banner not just over God’s rescue of Israel from exile, but over all his acts of rescue, especially the cross of Christ:

For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, . . . I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

All of creation, all of redemption, all of history is designed by God to display God—to magnify the greatness of the glory of God. That is the ultimate goal, all things, including missions. “The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God—the display and communication of the supreme worth and beauty of God.”

## **Another Stream of Revelation: Our Gladness**

But there is another stream of revelation flowing in the Bible concerning what God is up to in the world he has made and the world he is governing. He is not only seeking the glorification of his name; he is seeking the jubilation of the peoples *in* his name. Ponder this second stream of texts with me for a few moments.

Paul tells us in Romans 15:8 that the Son of God came to confirm God’s promises to the Jews. But immediately, then, he adds in

verse 9, “and in order that the Gentiles”—the non-Jewish peoples of the world—“might glorify God for his mercy.” And then he tells us what it means to glorify God for his mercy—his mercy! He quotes four Old Testament passages about God’s purpose for the joy of the nations (Rom. 15:9–12):

As it is written, “Therefore I will *praise* you among the Gentiles, and *sing* to your name.” And again it is said, “*Rejoice*, O Gentiles, with his people.” And again, “*Praise* the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples *extol* him.” And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles *hope*.”

What does it mean that God’s aim in missions is “that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy”? Gather up all his words! It means, Let the peoples *praise*! Let the peoples *sing*! Let the peoples *rejoice*! Let the peoples *extol*! Let the peoples *hope*! It is unmistakable what God is up to in history: the gladness of the peoples in God!

And if we go back to the Psalms, the purpose of God for all the peoples of the earth is clear: joy in God above all things.

- Psalm 47:1: “Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!”
- Psalm 66:1–2: “Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!”
- Psalm 67:3–4: “Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy.”
- Psalm 68:32: “O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord.”
- Psalm 96:1: “Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!”
- Psalm 97:1: “The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!”

- Psalm 98:4: “Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!”
- Psalm 100:1: “Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!”

There is no doubt that God’s global aim in creation and redemption is not only the glory of his name but also the gladness of the peoples. Specifically, the gladness of the peoples *in God*.

And if someone asks, Couldn’t you do the same thing with faith and obedience and life? Couldn’t you trace through all the Bible the places where God aims at these? Why not focus on those as the aim of God and the aim of missions?

If you ask that, I would say, Why do you think the great theologians who wrote the Westminster Catechism said, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and *enjoy* him forever”? Why didn’t they say, “To glorify God and *trust* him forever”? Or, “To glorify God and *obey* him forever”? Or, “To glorify God and have *life* in him forever”?

Isn’t the answer that the essence of each of these experiences—of faith and obedience and life, indeed all genuine spiritual experience—isn’t the essence of them all the enjoyment of God *in* those acts, such that if you remove the enjoyment of God from them (faith, obedience, life), they cease to be God-exalting acts?

- Isn’t the essence of faith the embrace of God in Christ as the all-sufficient satisfier of our souls—not just the giver of good gifts, but the giver himself? Isn’t faith, at its essence, being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus (John 6:35)?
- And isn’t obedience, with all its thousands of manifestations, at its essence, doing what God says with a view to enjoying more of God in the very doing of it, and the reward of it? For example, we obey the command to love our neighbor by expanding our joy in God in our neighbor’s enjoyment of

God. I would argue that this is the nature of all God-exalting obedience (cf. Heb. 12:2; Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:7).

- And isn't the essence of eternal life to know God, as Jesus says in John 17:3? And what is knowing God in the fullest biblical sense? To know him like the devil knows him, with all the facts just right, but hating them? No. To know God in a saving way is to know his all-satisfying beauty and greatness and worth for what they really are, precious and soul-satisfying. To know him rightly is to treasure what is known.

If the enjoyment of God is withdrawn as an essential aspect of faith or obedience or life, they cease to be the goal of God. They cease to be what they are. Faith is not saving faith without being satisfied in all that God is for us in Christ. Obedience is not obedience where there's no obedience to the command, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). And life is not life where God himself is not our delight.

So I say again, in creation and redemption and in the mission of the church, God aims supremely at both: the glory of his name, and the gladness of the peoples.

## Why Jesus Came

And in the fullness of time, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into the world to secure both of these goals. He came for the vindication of his Father's glory, and for the salvation of his Father's children. And he did this by dying on the cross and rising from the dead.

The night before he died, in great distress he said, "What shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (John 12:27–28). Christ died for glory-belittling sinners to show that God does not sweep the dishonoring of his name under the rug of the universe. He died to vindicate the worth of his glory (Rom. 3:23–26).

And he also came “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). He said, “The Son of Man came . . . to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). A ransom from everlasting misery to everlasting joy—“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11; cf. 17:13). And at the end of the age, when all the peoples are gathered before Jesus, those who have received him as their treasure will hear the words, “Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:23). This is why he came: to purchase by his blood the joy of the peoples in the joy of their Master.

Jesus died for this: the glory of his Father, and the gladness of his people. Frontier missions is an extension to the nations of Jesus’ mission to the world. He came for the glory of the Father and the gladness of the peoples. So the chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *and* the joy of all peoples.

But not just *and*, rather *in*. The aim of history, the aim of Christ in dying for sinners is the glory of God *in* the gladness of the nations. The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *in* the joy of all peoples.

This is so because when you enjoy someone you honor that person. You magnify their value. You glorify them. If I say to my wife, “It makes me happy to be with you,” she doesn’t accuse me of selfishness. Why? I just said that I am motivated to be with her by my own happiness. Because when my happiness is in her, it calls attention to her worth, not mine. She is honored when I say, “It makes me happy to be with you.” So is Christ. So is God the Father. They are seen to be a supreme treasure when they become for us our supreme pleasure. They are glorified in us when we are satisfied in them.

## **Embrace the One Great End**

Therefore I say again, “The chief end of missions is the supremacy of God *in* the joy of all peoples.” When the peoples find their

supreme gladness in God, God will be supremely glorified in them. Which is why he created the world, and why Jesus' cross exist, and that's why the Cross conference and this book exist. That's what we pray will be the everlasting upshot of those days and these pages.

We will not choose between glorifying God and making people glad. We will not choose between praising God's supremacy and removing people's suffering—especially eternal suffering. We will not choose between hallowing God and helping people. In the aims of the Cross conference, and the aims of global missions, we will not choose between the aim of seeing Christ magnified among the peoples and seeing the peoples satisfied in Christ.

Because these two are one. Christ is supremely magnified in the peoples when the peoples are supremely satisfied in Christ. We have the best news in all the world: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died and rose and reigns to make the nations fully and eternally glad in the glory of God.

When Christ becomes the satisfaction of the nations, and God becomes their delight, then he is honored and they are saved. And you—you who will take or send this best of all messages—you turn out to be a person of great compassion toward perishing sinners and great zeal for the glory of God. Don't ever choose between these two: praising God and pitying sinners, divine glory and human gladness. Embrace this one great end, and give your life to it—the supremacy of God in the joy of all peoples.