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# Theology of Missions 1

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*Dr. Robert E. Coleman*

*A lecture delivered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donald Owens' School of World Missions  
Lecture Series  
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This is certainly a happy providence to join your school here for a few days for these lectures. I am honored for the invitation. Already many of you have gone out of your way to facilitate my ministry this week. I believe that this was ordained of the Lord even though I did not know exactly the plans a couple of days ago. It is a joy to be here on this beautiful campus and I am delighted that my wife and a couple of grandsons can be here as well.

I am going to be thinking with you about missions. Today I want to begin by looking at the very faith that makes us missionaries. Tomorrow we will think about what we do. And then on Wednesday, we will focus on the empowering of His Spirit.

Perhaps I can best introduce the theology of missions tonight in the form of a picture. I will use eight aspects of the picture to unfold this theology. Try to picture with me the painting of a scene at sea. A storm has rolled in and the skies are covered with darkness. In the sky you can see the flash of lightning. There in the distance a small boat has been crushed against some breakers, and is disintegrating under the pounding of the ocean. And you can see painted into the picture some seamen struggling for survival. Their anguish is seen on their faces as they cry for help. In the foreground, there is one large protruding rock. And one of those seaman has managed to make his way to this place of refuge—this rock of salvation. He is pictured there holding on with both hands for his life. But as you look at this picture, this picture of destruction, you look at that one person who has made his way to safety, there is something missing. Can you see what it is?

Now I would like all of us to discard that painting and see another which would be very similar; which shows the same black clouds of

darkness, though in the far corner there is some light that is breaking through. The ship that has been crushed against the breakers is disintegrating, and you see the same seamen struggling in the water crying for help. The only hope in the foreground of the painting is this large protruding rock, and there is a seaman who has found this place of refuge. But there is now a change. He is holding on with only one hand. His head is turned somewhat to the side as he looks out to the scene of devastation and some of his friends struggling in the waters. And as he holds on with that one hand, the other is reaching down beneath the waters to lift up a friend who was sinking. And that friend in turn is struggling to reach out to help another.

That is the picture I want you to see as we think about missions. First, note how in that rock we see a secure place of safety—a rock that can illustrate God and His strength and His power. Sometimes in fact, He is referred to in the Bible as “the Rock.” Indeed this is where we begin, just as the Bible, “In the beginning, God...” This supernatural reference point is where we begin in missions. Quite different from the more humanistic approach of theological liberalism, which begins with the ingenuity of man to work out his own salvation, relying on sociology, psychology, or anthropology. Though that is helpful, it does not give you certainty what comes from God Himself. It follows the old dictum “know thyself,” which sounds reasonable until you realize if that is all we have from which to learn, we have begun with the problem and we will end in confusion. But if we begin with God, we begin already with the answer—with all the resources of the universe.

God is the one who is infinite, who is Almighty—Spirit—not to be identified with what he created in matter. This mighty God is omnipresent, everywhere at everyplace all the time, yet not bound by any. He never changes. He is immutable. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And even more remarkable to me is his omniscience. He knows everything. He knows even the end from the beginning and because of this infinite foreknowledge, He can work all circumstance to His knowledge and purpose. And since God is Sovereign and Omnipotent, He can do everything that He wants to do. We recognize, too, His moral attributes.

He is just and righteous. He cannot do anything wrong. He is truthful, which means he can never make an error in judgment. He is holy, which means He cannot be defiled. And even more wonderful, He is love—love that cannot be self-contained—a love that insists making itself known. Yet this great God is also a Person. He is self-conscious; He is intelligent; and He is free—a freedom that is always exercised in consistency with his nature of perfection. In this personality, we recognize him moving among us as one who cares. He sees, feels, touches, speaks, and weeps. He is one who actually appears to us finally in the person of His Son.

I think of the boy who was there beside the riverbank. He was waving his hand and crying out, “Here I am! Here I am!” People noticed and began to make fun of him, telling him “Lad, go on home, nobody on that river steamer is going to notice you.” But he just kept raising his hand and crying, “Here I am! Here I am!” Then to the dismay of everyone, as that river boat got directly in front of the little boy, it swerved and came to the river bank. The captain walked over, put his arm around the boy, and then they walked together on board that great river steamer. As the whistle blew and started to go out into the channel, the boy turned around to the startled crowd on the bank, and said, “I knew all along this boat was gonna stop for me, because the captain of this boat is my daddy.”

Oh what a difference it makes, to know that this infinite God of the universe, this Omnipotent Power who can do all that He pleases, this King of glory, is our Father. He is personal.

This is represented in the Holy Trinity where we see God in His person as the Father, and in His person as the Son, and in His person as the Spirit—neither confused in unity nor divided in number. I know this is a mystery, but all of the truth that leads to mission is summed up in the Trinity. While we cannot fully explain it, it overwhelms us with its wonder. We might think of God as the Father in administration or as the Son as the revelation of Himself or the Spirit in operation and power. Sometimes, this Trinity is likened to an illustration of electricity, where you have the dynamo as the Father, and wire as the Son, and the current going through

as the Spirit. But any of these elements fall far short in describing the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

But what is significant to us is that this undivided God as a Person, can have a personal relationship with those persons made in His image. He is always seeking that fellowship. He is a missionary God.

As you look again at that picture, notice that man who is holding onto the rock, so that now the strength of this rock belongs to him. And we see an outreached hand from that person seeking another. God, you see, is always desiring to communicate with that which He has made. Indeed it is this revelation of Himself through zhis Word that becomes now the means by which His purposes can be known. Since God is truthful in whatever He speaks, He can be depended upon. He will always tell us what is right. And because He is love, He always wants the best for His creatures. God has spoken in the prophets as they have written down His revelation, and ultimately and finally, through it all, He speaks to us in the person of His Son. What we have in Scripture is simply the final way in which He is revealing Himself—the Word made flesh.

That great truth of inspiration again brings us into the mystery of how God can work. He does not violate any person when He gives this revelation. All those who receive this are like you and me, but when the Spirit came upon them, He gave them this ability to perceive what God was saying—not only to understand it, but also to communicate it and finally to write it down so that they did not inject into the message their own corruption. That is why we can say that the Word finally written was without any error. It was indeed the Word of God.

That is why we hear someone like Paul saying to Timothy, “preach the Word.” That word “preach” carries a great deal of authority. It can be likened unto a herald who was dispatched by the king to deliver a message. He would ride his horse into a village, dismount, sound the trumpet. As the people gathered, he would unroll the scroll and read the proclamation. Then he would get back onto his horse and ride to the next village. It was not his responsibility to explain everything about the word, but only to

announce it. The authority was not in the messenger, but in the word he proclaimed. And that is our authority.

Paul cautioned Timothy against being enticed by those who try to lead us astray, to those who listen to the opinions of men having itching ears wanting a truth that would appeal to their own self-interest. Indeed this is a danger that we should recognize. There are so many that would like to dilute the authority of the Scripture. We can be certain that when the Bible loses its authority in any way, we lose any real communication in missions. For that is its purpose. As Jesus said, "Search the Scripture, they testify of me." Or as John wrote, "These things were written so that you might believe that Jesus the Christ is the son of God," and have life in His name. The way we come to know the Living Word in Christ is through that which is written in the book. That is why Wesley would say, "I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, and God himself condescended to teach that way. He has written it down in a book. Oh! Give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God. Let me be a man of one book." That is our heritage. Because of this book, we become missionaries. The Bible without that sense of mission loses its purpose, just as the mission without the authority of the Word loses its power.

Look again at that picture. We see that man now identified with the rock, like our Lord reaching out to save. Jesus is God's expression of love to us, sent to seek and to save the lost. We recognize the condition of mankind as we look at that picture. The world is very dark and stormy; yet God made us so that we could as persons love Him. He made us in His image as spiritual creatures. We do not live by bread alone; He breathed into us that immortality which is derived from His own so that the soul will never die. He made us intelligent so that we can think thoughts after Him. In the beginning we were made undefiled, holy and free. He knew of course how this freedom would be misused. He could already foresee the calamity that would fall upon that which He had made. But He was willing to do it because there was no other way we could exercise true love. That's what we were made for. Indeed God Himself, in order to give expression

to His nature, made another person as an object of His own love within Himself. Just as we reflect that image of God, we can not be whole persons unless we return that love to Him. When we took that freedom to devise our own desire, our own pleasure, not to heed God who had made us—we had the beginning of what we call sin. Under the beguilement of Satan who has always tempted and sought to destroy, our forebearers in the garden actually thought that they could do it by themselves. In fact, the devil suggested they could become wise as God, and under that illusion they turned to their own way.

This action was an assertion of independence which really amounted to self-worship. This is the idolatry of self—the complete reversal of the way God made us so that we would truly turn to him as the author and finisher of our faith. And that rebellion against God, which has perpetuated itself in the human race, has brought this great storm—this great destruction upon the world—alienating our affections, darkening our intellect, and perverting our will so that the whole world is depraved. Those who follow in that expression in way then become separate from God, a course which ultimately leads to hell. God who is holy cannot ignore that affront to His nature. And it cannot be reversed unless by some intervention by God himself, we will be restored to his purpose. Those who object on grounds that it diminishes God's nature of love fail to comprehend the undivided nature of His being. Indeed if God's judgment did not fall on that which would destroy His beloved, you would question His own sovereign love and His perfection. You see, it is not because God's love is limited, but because His love is unlimited that hell as well as heaven is made necessary.

An atheist wrote a tract, which fell into the hands of a man named C.T. Studd, an indifferent sportsman in England. As he read it, God brought conviction to his soul, and coming to salvation, he became one of our great missionaries. This is what the atheist said:

If I firmly believed as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion would mean

to me everything. I should labor in its cause alone. I would esteem one soul, gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand nor seal my lips. Earth, its joys and griefs would not occupy the moments of my thoughts. I would strive to look upon eternity alone and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach it in season and out of season and my text would be “what shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world yet lose his own soul?”

Yes, there is this great sense of the worlds destruction, the lostness of humanity all around us that cannot be ignored.

As you look again at that picture you will understand the reason how the infinite God who made us to know Him and to love Him could rescue the perishing. That hand reach of God, clothed itself in our very humanity and became one with us. God in the incarnation, became both God and man. Here again is a mystery and yet its what we must affirm—Jesus in the flesh clothed that hand with humanity, so that He is indeed a perfect man in every respect as we are, though He never sinned. He was even tempted like we are. We think we know what being tempted is, but we really do not. The only one who understands temptation is the one who was tempted and never sinned. We all give in; only God Himself has been truly tempted. We see in Christ how He overcame for us—it begins in the incarnation, continues through the incarnate life of Jesus, and finally it culminates on the cross—when Christ Himself accepted in His body that judgment of our sin. He suffered for us—the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, put to death in the flesh, but then raised by the Holy Spirit. The resurrection of Christ now brings into focus the awesome reality of the cross. For now we must account for why he died, and the only reason given is that He died for our sins and rose from the dead for our justification. He is the only who could do it. Only God and man in the person of the Son could make that atonement.

Today, some say it is really not that important as to who Christ is, whether He is God or just the greatest man who has ever lived. What matters is the goodness of His life. Others would say, “Well it would only be Christ who could save us, but you don’t really have to hear the gospel. As long as you are sincere in doing the best you can, that is enough.” But that was not the way the church has preached this message. They went forth to declare that there was no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And indeed when you look at that picture, you realize that the initial hand that reaches out is single. There is none other.

Robert G. Lee is a well-known preacher of the last generation. He liked to tell about his first visit to the holy land. Some of you may have heard him. He would tell how he was with his touring party—and then one day the guide pointed into a distance and said, “Now there’s the hill called Calvary.” The great preacher seeing that for the first time, felt a great emotion beginning to swell upon him. He got excited! He started to walk faster and soon he was running up that hillside. The guide was the first to get to him. He found Dr. Lee standing on the summit, panting for breath. The guide slipped beside him and said, “Sir, have you been here before?” There was a long pause, then with a whispered tone Dr. Lee said, “Yes, I was here nearly two thousand years ago.” We were all there nearly 2000 years ago. When God became man, He was representing us all, when He bore our sins at Calvary and when He rose from the dead; He was one against the world. And when you see Him there, lifted up, you see the love of God. Even while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

I think that is why Wesley’s hymn “And Can It Be?” is my favorite. It fills me with such wonder, and like Wesley I still can’t explain it; but I can bear witness to it. Do you know that old song? Do you sing it here? I want you to join me:

And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior’s love  
Died He for me who caused His pain



For me who Him to death pursued  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me

And as we think again at that picture, and we see that hand in our mind, God clothed in the flesh of Jesus Christ reaching into the darkness, reaching into the lost world—you see now an offer, a gift of salvation. You grasp that hand and receive the grace of God. For indeed as we sang, it is too amazing to grasp fully because it is all unmerited, undeserved. It is all of grace which we received through no merit of our own but simply because the hand is extended. We grasp it by faith, turning from our own self-insufficiency in true repentance, renouncing our past and laying hold upon that which is firm and steady in God. We speak of this as now being justified, so that we stand before God without condemnation. Our sins are forgiven and there is a regeneration of life. The old things are now passed away and all things become new. It's grace—and that grace of course, reaches to all people.

Now again, it is hard for some who have to come out of the more liberal tradition to comprehend fully the significance of this, for they still like to insist that we, by our own effort, by our own goodness, or by our conformity to certain regulations and ordinances, attain God's favor. The late Dr. Charles Berry, one of the well-known preachers of Scotland, tells how this was his position when he entered the early years of ministry. Like many other young men with a liberal theological training, he minimized the atoning nature of Christ's work and looked upon Christianity as essentially being a good person. During his first pastorate in England late one night, while sitting in his study, he heard a knock. When he opened the door there was a Lancashire girl standing.

"Are you a minister?" she asked. And getting an affirmative answer, she replied anxiously, "You must come with me quickly. I want you to get my mother in."

"Imagining it was the case of some drunken woman out on the street," Berry said, "Why don't you go and get a policeman?"

The girl said, “Oh no! My mother is dying, and you must come with me and get her in—to heaven!”

The young minister dressed and followed her in a lonely street on a journey of nearly a mile which led finally into the room of this woman. He knelt down beside her and began to describe the kindness of Jesus explaining that He had come to show us how to live more unselfishly. When suddenly the desperate woman cut him off and cried, “Mister, that’s no use for the likes of me. I’m a sinner. Can’t you tell me of someone who can have mercy on me and save my poor soul?”

“I stood there” said Dr. Berry “in the presence of the dying woman and I had nothing to tell her. In the midst of sin and death, I had no message. But in order to bring something to that dying woman, I went back to my mother’s knee, and I began to tell her about the cross and Christ, who was able to save to the uttermost.”

Tears began running down the cheeks of the eager woman. “Now you’re getting at it,” she saying, “now you helping me.” And the famed preacher concluding his story said, “Well, if you want to know I got her in, and praise be to God, I got in myself!” Oh it is beautiful to see this young preacher and this old woman going into the glory of God together. And that is the way we all come in—it is only by God’s grace.

I know that there are different ways by which we look at those who have this privilege. Those in the Reform tradition may say this kind of saving grace is differentiated from the more common grace, as if given to only those elected especially by God. Arminians, on the other hand, would say everyone has enough grace even to believe so that that is the privilege of all. Of course, even that faith itself is a gift of God, so we can make no boast. It is still not our work. Its all by grace. In either case, you never know who the elect are until you offer the gospel. So wherever you are coming from, we all admit it is by grace. God takes the initiative, and God is reaching out in this unmerited love to the ends of the earth. I can hear those early Methodists singing, “Oh that the world might taste and see the riches of His grace. The arms of love that encompass me would all mankind embrace.”

But look again at that picture, and you will notice that as the second person holds that hand, he has become very much like the one who was represented in the first hand. There is actually here an impartation of the likeness of the Savior—a transformation of character. We call this sanctification, which is essentially being made in the likeness of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. It is Christlikeness, and indeed it is that kind of love displayed in God which we see in beautiful focus in the life of Jesus that becomes the example of true holiness.

We recognize that there are different ways that this is understood. Some would see holiness as a progressive work of God's spirit, that continues on in this life but is never quite finished until we are glorified in the presence of God. In our Reformed brothers tradition, they understand sin as any deviation from the absolute character of God. You could buy a fifty cent candy bar and commit sin. You say that "I don't think of sin that way," but from their point of view you could use that 50 cents for missions or give it to someone in need. From their point of view, it does not matter whether you understand it or not, the question always is what would Jesus do in the same situation. So in their view of sin, you wouldn't speak of entire sanctification; it will always be progressive, moving on. The Wesleyan tradition would understand sin differently as a deliberate transgression, and allowance would be made for your ignorance. Certainly we struggle with this ignorance all our life, we are going to be making wrong choices, and when we speak of this kind of holiness, it is not that you reach the goal of Christ's perfect character. We are struggling toward that goal, but it always eludes us. The holiness we can know is not in performance but in desire, in love. We still have our human infirmities, physical weaknesses; but in the heart there should always be this desire to please Him who gave Himself for us—a desire that is expressed in obedience to the will of God. Indeed from the very beginning there should be a sense of this cleanness in the sight of God. When one comes to see the deeper dimension of sin and disposition and attitude, we can commit even that to him in that confidence that He is still able save to the uttermost.

So sanctification begins when we grasp that hand, and as we begin to be conformed into his likeness, changed into his image from glory to glory even by the Spirit of the Lord. This is on-going, but all along the way you can be certain that the blood goes deeper than the stain of sin has gone. I like the way my Wesleyan brothers foresee how that blood can cleanse even from the deeper dimensions of carnality. This is not to suggest that as you continue to grow there will not be more correction as you receive more light.

But sanctification is not just an inward transformation. It is also through that indwelling love that there is motivation now to reach out, just as Christ who has become our life reaches out. When Jesus prayed in the high priestly prayer of John, He prayed that as He was sent into the world, so now His disciples were being sent. And He said, “For their sake I sanctify myself that they too may be sanctified through the Word.” It is interesting as you look at this context and you take the root of the word “sanctify,” which is “being set apart,” you realize that in Jesus’ case, it did not involve cleansing for He was already the perfect Son of God. But it was for that mission for which He was sent. The tense indicates that it is a continual action. He has given Himself to fulfill the will of the Father who sent Him. That commitment led Him to the cross. For the disciples, He was praying that they would come to that point of commitment because truly for them there would be a cross, a dying out as they know their life in sin—because they should be a vessel truly sanctified for God to use. This is a dimension of holiness I think we need a lot more attention to. And yet our mission is more than bringing people to Christ, and showing them that hand that reaches others where they can receive salvation. Our mission is also to lead them on—in holiness. As Wesley said, “You have nothing to do but to save souls, to call all men into repentance and to build them up in that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.”

There is a little island off the coast of Scotland. They call it the Holy Isle, where it is believed that Christianity first came to root. There is little span of water between that and the mainland. There’s a little shack there on the shore which advertises “visit the Holy Isle where the saints have

trod,” and underneath the sign are the words, “we can take you.” The life and business of the church must be to take the people to where the saints have trod. Indeed holiness is to become now the powerful motivation in missions, where the love that God had for the world displayed in Christ and which we now participate in becomes the love that drives us to follow in that same mission.

I still remember the great International Congress of Evangelism in 1966. It was the first one I think for many hundreds of years. We met in Berlin and there were about a thousand representatives from most of the free countries of the world. In the closing service, Billy Graham preached a sermon on the stains on the altar. He concluded that sermon by telling the story of H. C. Morrison, whom many of you recognize as the founder of Asbury Theological Seminary and the great holiness preacher of the south land. Billy Graham told how Morrison one day out in the field had been chopping corn, looked down the road and saw an old Methodist circuit rider coming along. He knew that man from other acquaintances and he knew he was a man of God—a holy man. And as he rode by, Morrison fell under such conviction that he dropped on his knees there between those corn rows, and resolved there he would give his life to Jesus. After Billy Graham told that story, he called us to our knees as he said, “I want to be a holy man... Oh make me a holy man.” I believe that is your desire and indeed wherever we are, if we are going to be of any real use in missions, holiness must be at the heartbeat of our life.

But as you look again at the picture, that hand—now the hand of Christ reaching out to another who in turn reaches to another, you begin to see how through multiplication there is an incorporation into the whole body of our Lord Himself. The church is being formed, called the communion of the saints. You see there are no isolated Christians. Whenever we come to Christ, we are joined to everyone else who has received that hand. And we become agents of the kingdom of God, the means by which the King reigns in the hearts of people on earth just as it is in heaven. This church is not divided. We are all one in Christ. There is no male or female, slave or free, rich or poor—just one body, just as Christ is one. There are

diversities of gifts, but everyone is a minister of that body. I am afraid in the Protestant Reformation, we did not quite get that message through. We succeeded very well in our relationship with God, so that we did not have to go through another intermediary,—a priest on earth, but could go directly to God. But a priest is also a minister to—his fellow man. In that sense I am afraid we do not yet fully understand our priesthood. Yes, we can come to God directly, but we are also to be a ministering priest to others whom God loves and for whom Jesus gave his life. So here you see a church being formed that becomes a ministering body that reaches forth in evangelism, in discipleship, in building up people in this same faith which has been our means of salvation. How easy is it for us to forget it.

I think of that touring party going to Westminster Abby and if you have been there you probably saw two or three touring parties as you walked through this place where the kings of England are buried. Well, this had been going on for a while when an old lady in this touring party interrupted her guide and said, “Young man, would you stop your chatter for a minute and tell me how many people have been saved here lately.” There was an embarrassing silence that came into that touring group. Saved? In Westminster Abby? But why not? Isn’t that the business of the church? Is not that what we are supposed to be doing? Aren’t we simply an extension of the body of Christ, as He came to serve, not to be served but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many? Is this not our purpose as well? The Church you see that is not involved in that ministry becomes a contradiction, and that is true for each individual in the church. If you are not expressing it in the way God has gifted you, that ministry, that priesthood, something is missing.

You will recall as you will look at that painting, there was something in the background that did not appear up in front where you see that large rock and one seaman who has found that place of refuge from that dark despair of the storm, how he was holding on with one hand and yet reaching out to another, who in turn reaches beyond. Yes, that was the way the kingdom would finally come. But up there, in the sky, beginning to break through the clouds was a ray of light. The sun would soon come through

and a new day would dawn. Oh someday, you see, God's purposes will be fulfilled. There will be a final consummation. The kingdom will finally come to fruition in the triumph of the church. You can be certain that God will accomplish His purpose, and the Bride that He loved will be adorned in beautiful holiness and be presented unto Him in the praise of God. As brought out so beautifully in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation, where after the shout from heaven, the Lord God Almighty reigns, the heavenly beings exhort themselves and say, "Let us be glad and give honor to the him who sits on the throne for the wedding of the Lamb has come. The Bride has made herself ready and she has been given clean linen, fine linen that is without any blemish. This speaks of the righteous deeds of the saints."

That is the way the Bible ends—in a wedding, just like it began in the garden. But the end is better than the beginning. Now through the centuries, and as the years have unfolded, there is a final wedding to the Bride that He had in mind as He made us, the object outside Himself to which He could express His love. That is why He made a church because the church to Him will always be a display of His perfection—of His glory. Indeed for us as we behold Him there in His glory, we have our highest joy. This is the chief end of man—to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. This is the final consummation of all that was made—the triumph of his Church.

Recall that throne scene in the seventh chapter of Revelation where John saw the door of heaven opened. There around the throne was a multitude so numerous one cannot even count them. As far as you can see in all directions they are gathered. They are waving palm branches; they are clothed in white, symbolic of their holiness, and he tells us they came from every tribe, from every tongue, from every people, from every nation. The Great Commission is fulfilled!

God will not be defeated in His purpose. Any activity now which does not contribute to that destiny is an exercise in futility, for nothing finally will remain except that which brings glory to Him who sits on the throne. The great commission simply gets us on the wave length of history to which all things are moving. Oh the joy that this brings to the soul, to

know that our labor is never in vain. And whether we see small things or great things, we know that the Son will break through the clouds, and that the day of the Lord is coming. It makes you walk on tiptoes. That is why you can never stop; you can never be discouraged. The best is always yet to be.

The old missionary E. P. Scott spent most of his years working among the Northern tribes in India. One day he was seeking to make contact with a group that he had not yet reached. Suddenly he was surrounded by a band of warriors and they pointed their long spears at his heart. The old missionary thought that the end had come. It happened though that he had his violin with him. He quickly picked up that case, opened it, took up his instrument, put it to his shoulder and he began to play and sing in their own native tongue:

All hail the power of Jesus' name  
Let angels prostrate fall  
bring forth the royal diadem  
and crown him lord of all

As he played and sang he closed his eyes, momentarily expecting death, when nothing happened, even when he finished the third stanza, he opened his eyes and saw that the spears had fallen from the hands of his captors. Tears were streaming down their cheeks, and they begged him to tell them of that Name—the Name above every name, the only Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. So he went home with them and told them the old old story of Jesus. And a church was raised up there that is still giving praise to God.

Now I do not want to suggest that you will be delivered from adversities. I do not want you to think for a moment that you will be spared hardship or even death. For after all, we have already professed that we have taken up the cross. Though it may not find its expression in physical death, in our spirit we already know that we are not our own. We belong to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. If you enter into the mission of God, you can expect difficulty; you can expect hardship, you can expect



suffering, and indeed—this will be in God’s plan for through these difficulties God is conforming you to know more of Him who gave up everything for you. How would we ever learn to be like Jesus unless God would lead us through some valleys? Yes, it’s going to be a difficult task, but whatever comes, you can know that the kingdom will be realized, and you can rejoice knowing what is yet to be. You can praise God from whom all blessings flow.

A few years ago, coming back from a trip, my wife and I stopped over in London for a day. I did it purposely because I wanted to go out to the house of John Wesley. I had never been there before. It is a two story house just across the street of Bon Hill Cemetery, where John Bunyan is buried, and Susanna Wesley and Isaac Watts, and the non-conformists. We got there about noontime. We were met at the door by the custodian. We explained we would like, if it was possible, to go to the room on the second floor where John Wesley died. He graciously obliged. We walked up the steps to that room just to the right. In the small room was a small bed. John Wesley was just about five feet and two and half inches tall. The only other furnishing in the room was a chair and then a kneeling rail, where he would pray every morning. I had read not long before an account of Wesley’s death, and as I looked at the bed, I could visualize that scene that was described by one who was present. His friends were gathered about. Lying there he saw this small group of sad people gathered around. Suddenly he burst into singing, “I’ll praise my Maker while I breathe and when my soul is lost in death, praise shall employ my nobler powers.” That must have startled the people there to watch him die. To give them some comfort, he turned and said, “Best of all is, God is with us.” Then he exhorted his friends to kneel down, and pray and praise.

So Marietta and I knelt down at the bed, at the very place where those friends knelt that day. I looked at the head board and visualized Wesley there as he died. With his last words and strength lifting his right hand and whispering, “I’ll praise... I’ll praise... I’ll praise... I’ll praise...” He whispered farewell and his spirit was taken by an angel into the presence of his Lord.

What a beautiful way to die, but even more meaningful, that is the way we should live,—with the praise of God on our lips and His praise and adoration reflected in our lives. That is the reason we are made—to give glory to God and our greatest joy is in beholding Him who made us, who wants us to be like Him, to love Him with all our mind and soul and strength and love those He loves—our neighbors as we love ourselves. This is holiness. This is the reason for existence. This is the reason for a mission—to go forth to a world that is lost and struggling in the sea of destruction, crying out for help. This is the reason to reach out in love with that same hand that reached us and embraced them, and bring them close to Him that we have come to know. This is the heartbeat of missions. This is the fabric of theology that gives us our faith. It is because we believe that we become missionaries.

Every Christian who believes in Jesus Christ is a missionary. Whether they understand it or not, that is what has made them what they are, and in that same faith and love, we need to go forth in this great stream of the church until the church militant becomes at last the church triumphant. Then we will join our brothers and sisters from every tongue and every tribe and every people and every nation around the throne of glory and praise God forever. What a way to live in the true faith of missions!

Thank you, Father, for this privilege to come for a moment into this holy place, and to think again on that faith which we embrace—that faith which indeed has worked a miracle of grace in our lives, and makes us, too, to join that great triumphant procession leading someday to that eternal destiny in your presence. Oh hasten the time when this Gospel of the kingdom will at last be heard to the ends of the earth, and your purpose will be fulfilled. Yes, that is our desire, for that is what we are. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.