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# GOSPEL MEDITATIONS for MISSIONS

CHRIS ANDERSON
JD CROWLEY
DAVID HOSAFLOOK
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"By almost any standard—the intentionality of local churches to train, assess, and prepare prospective missionaries; the length of time it takes a missionary to raise support; the little sense of gospel partnership we have with the missionaries we do support—Western Christians don't do missions very well. The reason we don't do missions well is that we have not thought about missions well. This book has our poor thinking about missions in its crosshairs."

—Matthew Hoskinson, pastor of The First Baptist Church in the City of New York, and author of Assurance of Salvation

"There is nothing happening in this world that is more important than the mission of Jesus Christ. Nothing. What Christ is doing through the church to call out a people for His name's sake is the centerpiece of God's plan for this age and should be the focal point of every believer's life. *Gospel Meditations for Missions* is a tremendous resource to challenge and strengthen us about our place in God's global pursuit of His glory through the gospel of His Son. Take a month to feed your soul and fuel your heart by meditating on what Christ wants done and is doing among the nations!"

—**David Doran**, pastor of Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan, president of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, and co-author of *For the Sake of His Name* 

"Can we do missions without meditating on the gospel? Of course not. And yet, how many well-meaning, mission-minded saints go off into the harvest having failed to prepare their own hearts with due consideration of the good news? Too many I fear. *Gospel Meditations for Missions* helps us slow down to consider what is of first importance that we might hold this treasure more fully in our clay hearts. I joyfully commend it."

—**Thabiti Anyabwile**, pastor of Anacostia River Church in Washington, DC, and author of *What is a Healthy Church Member?* and *The Gospel for Muslims* 

"Some authors misconstrue what the Christian mission really is. Not Anderson, Crowley, Hosaflook, Keesee, and Tyrpak, however. They define, defend and describe biblical mission in ways as arresting and unique as their names. And in so doing they deepen both our understanding of what God is doing in the world and our desire to join Him in the doing of it! This book is something. Buy it; read it; pray it; and commend it to a friend."

—**David Hesselgrave**, professor emeritus of Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Chicago, IL, and author of *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* and other influential mission books

"The Christian's love for the gospel must be rekindled by spending time meditating on the gospel. The writers of this little book are striving to live gospel-centered lives, and their insights will stir your affections as you read them."

—Will Galkin, director of Galkin Evangelistic Ministries, pastor at Gospel Grace Church, Salt Lake City, and a leader of Plant for the Gospel, a church-planting initiative

# INTRODUCTION

I've often thought of myself as an observer of Christian missions. As a child, a college student, and finally a pastor, I appreciated commando-type Christians who took the gospel to unreached places. But I didn't think of it as normal Christianity—and certainly not as a part of my life.

I was wrong. Missions is a normal part of every Christian's life. Over the last several years, the Lord has graciously and relentlessly opened my eyes to the Bible's almost constant missionary emphasis. He's used sermons. He's used books like Piper's Let the Nations Be Glad, Doran and Johnson's For the Sake of His Name, Platt's Radical, Peters' A Biblical Theology of Missions, and numerous biographies. He's used the highly-acclaimed video series Dispatches from the Front by Tim Keesee. He's used real-life missionaries, including those supported by my church, my brother Dan (director of Brazil Gospel Fellowship Mission), my father-in-law Jack Leeds (who retired early to go to the field), JD Crowley, and David Hosaflook—all modern missionary heroes. Most of all, He's used the Scriptures to show me the "normalcy" of missions.

Christians must be confronted with missions on a regular, even daily basis. It's toward that end that we publish *Gospel Meditations for Missions*. I pray they will inform and inspire college students, church members, pastors, and even missionaries for the grand cause of world evangelization. As I have encouraged at the start of each devotional book in our *Gospel Meditations* series, I urge you to immerse yourself in the Scriptures prior to studying our comments. As you read the book, capture the passion of the writers, especially those who write *about* the mission field *from* the mission field. And respond with prayerful, audacious obedience: "Here am I, Lord. Send me."

For the sake of His name, Chris Anderson, *editor* 

# GOD IS THE GREAT MISSIONARY

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. John 4:23

Missions isn't an addendum that was stapled onto normal Christianity. It's at the heart of Christianity because it's at the heart of God Himself. God is the Great Missionary of the Scriptures. We see His missionary heart from the beginning of time, when He sought out our lost and evasive parents in Eden. We see it when He promised Abraham that all the nations of the world will be blessed through his (and His) seed. We see it when He promised to make the Messiah the King of an unending Kingdom and the Light of the darkened Gentiles. We certainly see it in John 4. Jesus' interaction with the spiritually thirsty woman at the well is a microcosm of God's work in the world. Again and again, through the conversation with her, with the disciples, and with a village of Samaritan converts, God's heart for missions is shown in all its glory.

The Great Missionary is seeking worshipers. In the middle of His discussion with the Samaritan woman, Jesus makes a startling and apparently random comment in verse 23: "The Father is seeking . . . people to worship Him." That's one of the most important statements in Scripture. God is seeking worshipers. It's amazing. It's life-shaping. It's the plotline of the whole Bible. God made us for His glory. Though we rebelled, God planned to save us for His glory, and He carried out that plan through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of His Son. God is the Great Missionary. He's not distant and ambivalent, perhaps willing to forgive sinners should we decide to seek after Him. On the contrary, He's the Planner of salvation. The Initiator. The Accomplisher. The Goal. In the memorable first words of John Piper's Let the Nations Be Glad, "Missions exists because worship doesn't." God is seeking worshipers in order to display His glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14).

The Great Missionary is making worshipers. Here's the thing. When God looks throughout the earth, He doesn't find a bunch of good-hearted people just waiting to be assembled into a heavenly choir. Rather, He finds rebels. He sees only our backs as we defiantly run our own way (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10–11). Yes, God is seeking worshipers, but He doesn't find them. He makes them! From what? From Samaritan women, for starters! From sinners like us. That's why the context of John 4:23 is so crucial. The statement that God is seeking people to worship Him in spirit and in truth isn't coming in a treatise about music or liturgy. It's coming in the midst of one of the great evangelistic conversations in history. Jesus is telling a disreputable and broken woman that God is seeking worshipers—and making them out of people like her! The location of worship (about which she had asked in v. 20) wasn't the issue. Her sinful past wasn't the issue (vv. 16–19). Faith in Him as the saving Messiah was (vv. 25–26). Thus, God is seeking worshipers (v. 23) as Jesus seeks and saves the lost (Luke 19:10). Those two statements are essentially the same!

The Great Missionary is calling us into His great missionary work. Christ's agenda included much more than this unnamed Samaritan woman. In His missionary zeal, He next focused on His disciples, urging them to emulate His missionary heart (vv. 27–38). Though all they could see in the Samaritan people were rivalry and race, Jesus told them to open their eyes and see a spiritual harvest (v. 35). An entire village of lost people was in the process of becoming worshipers of "the Savior of the world" (v. 42). The disciples needed to get with Christ's program. They needed to learn the joy of doing the Father's will—missions (v. 34). They needed to pray for laborers who would participate with God in the execution of His eternal, doxological rescue mission. They needed to devote their lives to bringing that harvest in. And they would. Will you?

Let the gospel open your eyes to the harvest of worshipers around the world.—CHRIS

# Is Your Spirit Stirred?

While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred. ACTS 17:16

In Acts 17 Paul, Silas, and Timothy are in Thessalonica facing heavy persecution from a rabble gang thrown together by antagonistic Jews (v. 5). At night, some concerned brothers smuggle the small squad away to the nearby town of Berea (v. 10). There the team does what it always did: It finds people to tell about Jesus. The Bereans turn out to be a hungry-hearted, Scripture-searching bunch (v. 11). But for the Thessalonian Jews, Berea is threateningly close, so they mobilize their mob to unleash mayhem there, too (v. 13). Again some brothers whisk Paul away, this time to Athens, but for some reason—probably logistical—Silas and Timothy get left behind (v. 14). (Sorry, fellas.)

Now Paul finds himself alone in Athens, waiting for his team to rejoin him. What a perfect chance for some "down time," for sightseeing or finding an Internet café to tweet about the *tzatziki*. Can you imagine Paul's social networking update? "Whew! Back-to-back escapes. Those Thessalonians have *issues*."

Don't think so. Paul's only notion of "working a net" was fishing for souls—preaching Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 6:14). Yes, he saw some sights in Athens, but everything he saw was filtered through his worldview as a man crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Mysteriously and magnificently, Christ was "in him" (Colossians 1:27–29), so he grew to love what Christ loves and lament what Christ laments. When Paul "saw the city wholly given to idolatry," something both awful and wonderful happened within him. *His spirit was stirred* (v. 16). His gut was wrenched. A lump of grief knotted in his throat. A surge of holy jealousy flushed his face because God—*his* God, the only *true* God—was being . . . *maligned?* . . . No, that wasn't quite it either. Alas, his God was . . . totally . . . *unknown* (v. 23)!

The lump in Paul's throat swiftly morphed into a leap in his step. See him at the synagogue engaging the potential Jehovah-fearers (v. 17a). Now he's in the marketplace preaching—and will be there tomorrow, and the next day, and the next (v. 17b). His message is gaining steam (v. 18). He's now heading to Athens' Supreme Court, the Areopagus, which met on the hill of the Greek god Ares—Mars Hill (v. 19). Paul's adrenalin must be surging now. He's a volcano ready to erupt. Go, Paul! Knock Ares & Friends off their pedestals, for Jesus is King of the hill, Supreme Justice of the world!

Paul's spiritual psychology is instructive. He's not a reluctant "missionary" on assignment. He's what I call a "passionary." There's a huge difference between mission and passion. Mission is required; passion is acquired. Mission is duty; passion is delight. Mission says, "I *have to* witness"; passion says, "I *get to* witness!" If all you have is mission, that's okay—It's not hypocrisy to obey orders despite a deficiency of passion. But the more you "mish," the more you will acquire the inner fire that Paul showed in Athens.

Soon after I arrived in Albania, I was begging God to help me love as He loves and grieve as He grieves. A *muezzin* began to howl from one of our city's many mosques. Then another. And another. The cacophony was beckoning thousands to embrace a faith that cannot save. Most tourists think "the call to prayer" is novel and culturally inspiring. But tears were streaming down my face. Why? Because God's compassion had come to my breast. You know of what I speak. You have felt powerful pangs of compassion for your hurting neighbors, for sinning co-workers, and for lost tribes in faraway lands. Those are passionary pangs. God put them in your heart. He is stirring your spirit.

Meditating on missions is meaningless without movement. When God stirs your spirit, He also loosens your tongue, rattles your routine, and gets you off the couch.

Let the gospel stir you—inside and out.—DAVID

# **ONE-WAY TICKET**

On frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. 2 CORINTHIANS 11:26

Paul wrote half of the New Testament, but he never wrote his memoirs. We have only a few pages in Luke's history about Paul's thirty years of breath-taking, back-breaking, nation-shaking gospel ministry, and even fewer tantalizing lines from Paul's own pen: "danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger . . . danger . . . danger" (2 Corinthians 11:26). The fact is, the struggles and soldiering of kingdom-work are mostly done in obscurity. In many parts of the world today, believers labor and suffer in silence—years in prison or a refugee camp pass unnoticed by the outside world. Nothing on Google, no biographies, no blogs. The viewpoint of most everyone around them is that these Christians are fools who have wasted their lives on a lost cause. This is nothing new—from the first century and the first martyrs who were burned to ash or became the food of wild beasts to the twenty-first century and Christians who suffer in silence or slog through nameless, indifferent places for the gospel, great sacrifice has often gone unnoticed.

During a trip in southern Egypt I came across an old Christian cemetery where a number of missionaries had been buried long ago. The desert heat shimmered over a scattering of crumbling mud-brick markers and broken epitaphs. It was so desolate. I thought of these men and women setting out for the field. They must have parted from their families with kisses and tears, but also with the joy that rushes the heart when Jesus is near. They followed Christ across the Atlantic to tell people about their Friend and Savior. They crossed the ocean but never re-crossed it. For them, missionary service was a one-way ticket. Of course, cross-bearing is a one-way ticket, too.

Jesus Himself reminded us of the beauty of extravagant service just days before Gethsemane and Calvary. As Jesus dined with His followers, a woman came and broke open a costly flask of fragrant spikenard and poured it without reservation upon the head of the Lord (Matthew 26:6–13). He knew that in just a few days His head would be torn with thorns and that the hair that now glistened with fragrant oil would soon be matted with blood and spit. Somehow, perhaps because she had been listening more closely than others, Mary knew, too. To their shame, it was the disciples who shook their heads and said, "Why this waste" (v. 8)? Sometimes the strongest and most hurtful opposition to this kind of lavish, loving, risk-taking abandonment comes from other Christians. But Jesus said, "Why do you trouble the woman, for she has done a beautiful thing to me" (v. 10). These words speak peace and purpose over that old Egyptian graveyard and over those I love—brothers and sisters who walk lonely paths in His service.

Much of the world remains unreached. If we look at statistics, listen to the voices of unbelief in our own ranks, or focus on our fears, then the cause seems lost and the effort too risky. But Christ has simply told us, "Follow me." And for those with a heart for Him, He will lead them through impossibilities as He builds His kingdom in every land. Pray for men and women with such hearts to follow Him there. Pray that you would follow Him there, too.

Let the gospel comfort and compel you, even when no one seems to care.—TIM

# An Overlooked Missions Hymn

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? PSALM 2:1

What are the most encouraging missionary hymns you can think of? Among the several you might list, I can almost guarantee that you wouldn't include the favorite missionary hymn of the early church: Psalm 2.

The second psalm is a God-breathed coronation hymn. Its first stanza considers how world rulers are constantly plotting to *subvert* God's chosen king (vv. 1–3). The second and third stanzas reflect on the Lord's calm *sovereignty* (vv. 4–6) as He reaffirms His invincible plan to *subjugate* every nation under His anointed king (vv. 7–9). In the final stanza, the Lord advises every king in the world to *submit* to His anointed (vv. 10–12). The people of Israel probably sang the four verses of this anthem at the enthronement of every king. It reminded them that their king was God's anointed and that no enemy could overthrow his reign (as long as the king remained faithful to God's law). Even more significantly, this hymn ultimately applies to Israel's greatest Son of David, Jesus *the* Anointed, the King of kings whose reign would never end. These are grand themes, and they have missionary implications, as the fledgling church in Acts demonstrates.

This bymn comforts us in persecution. Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching the gospel (Acts 3:1–4:4). As soon as the Sanhedrin released them from jail, they met with the church in Jerusalem. In the heat of the moment, the early church spontaneously prayed Psalm 2:1–2, word for word, as a group (Acts 4:24–26). It's not likely that they all had their Bibles open in front of them. (The printing press hadn't been invented yet.) Instead, they knew it from memory, probably because they had studied, sung, and prayed it so frequently. They had enjoyed the healing of this balm before. For them, persecution wasn't rare, and this persecution wasn't the worst. The worst raging of the Gentiles against God's Anointed King had taken place at the crucifixion. The cross was simultaneously the most heinous sin in human history and the climactic event in God's sovereign plan for history (4:27–28). As we remember that God ruled amidst the injustice and bloodshed at Calvary, we'll find His comfort amidst our own suffering for the gospel—the comfort that the second psalm intends to give.

This hymn emboldens us for proclamation. As the early church reflected on the truths of Psalm 2, they prayed not for safety or political change, but for boldness in the face of certain opposition (4:29–31). The early church had "chewed on" Psalm 2 long enough to become convinced that it provided them with the right to proclaim the gospel to every culture. Because Jesus is God's Anointed, the universal King, believers have His authority as His ambassadors to spread the news of His reign so that people from every nation will submit to Him.

There is immense comfort here for us. How it inspires our confidence in the Lord! We don't have to fear people or their reactions. This inspired anthem should continue to be central in our prayers for the gospel's advance. We, like the early church, should know it by heart, sing it often, and experience its power to comfort and embolden our gospel endeavors.

Let the gospel prompt your prayer for its bold proclamation amidst opposition.—JOE

# What Acts 1:8 Really Means

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea. ACTS 1:8

Sometimes an interpretation that's popular in Christian culture hijacks the intended meaning of a text. Take Acts 1:8. Do a web search on it and almost all the hits will say something like, "Where is your Jerusalem? Where is your Samaria?"—as if the main point of the verse is that every church down through the centuries has to become "Jerusalem" and repeat the steps that the first church took. If all we're thinking about when we read Acts 1:8 is, "Where is *our* Jerusalem?" we're subjectivizing objective truth (It's all about us, isn't it!), and missing something really, really huge that Jesus is doing.

So what's the huge thing Jesus is doing? He's using a multi-dimensional approach to prophecy that the apostles would have recognized from the Old Testament. Israel's prophets often gave both a short-term and long-term prediction. If the short-term prediction fizzled, no need to wait around for the long-term prediction; the guy was a false prophet. But if the short-term prediction happened, the rest was guaranteed.

Jesus is doing the same thing in Acts 1:8. The disciples need some serious encouragement. In a few minutes the Lord will leave, and they'll have to go back to the city that's famous for killing prophets (Matthew 23:37). What final words will Jesus leave with them? This is not the time for a missions strategy pep talk about reaching "your Jerusalem and your Samaria." It's time for the most audacious short-term and long-term predictions that a prophet ever gave.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." The Holy Spirit is the key to everything that follows. Do you really think the scaredy-cat apostles are going to turn Jerusalem upside down without the boldness of the Spirit? Or reach across that impossible chasm to the hated Samaritans without the love of the Spirit? Or make God famous to the ends of the earth without the endurance of the Spirit? The Holy Spirit of God is the only Engine that can power this stunning drive to the very last people group. And He's the only One Who can keep it all from flying apart.

If this new thing called "the church" is going to take over the world with the gospel, the Holy Spirit isn't going to do the same thing He did in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament it was, "Come and see." "Come, Naaman. Come, Queen of Sheba. Come to Israel where God's Spirit-filled prophets are preaching. Come to Jerusalem where God's Spirit-filled priests are ministering in God's temple." But Jesus inaugurated the new age of Holy Spirit power. It's no longer "Come and see," but "Go and tell." Every city becomes the holy city; every people becomes the chosen people; every church and every believer become the holy temple.

What if this first prediction had fizzled? End of story. Game over. Jesus is a false prophet. But it didn't fizzle—it *exploded*. The Spirit came in power! Check it off the list.

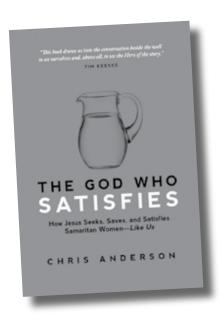
**"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea."** Hear this prediction through the ears of the apostles, and you'll see how impossible it sounds. Humanly speaking, the mission to reach Jerusalem should have ended with eleven more crosses on Golgotha. Yet here was the risen Lord telling them that they wouldn't get snuffed out. They would successfully make Jesus famous in Jerusalem and Judea.

Well, did it happen? I need to know. Because if it didn't, I'm checking out. I'm not waiting around. I'll go and find a savior I can trust. But it *did* happen, and it happened in a big way. Three thousand people in one day. Five thousand total a little while later. Glory! Check it off the list. Two down, two to go. (Continued tomorrow.)

Let the gospel blow you away with its audacious promises.—JD

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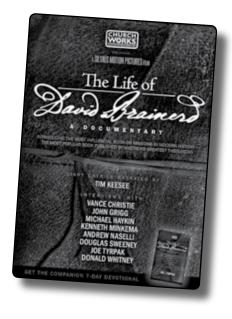


"In this little book, a gifted poet transitions to prose. I have known Chris Anderson for over two decades, first as a student and then as a fellow laborer in the work of the Kingdom. This book's focus on the Samaritan woman is full of Christ and the glorious gospel of grace. Written in an easy-to-read, popular style full of real-life illustrations, the book effectively links helpful background facts and precisely-stated theological truths to experiential application. It is a book that can be used for evangelism as well as for warming the believer's heart to renewed gratitude for what Christ has abundantly supplied."

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—**Nathan A. Finn**, dean and professor at Union University and writer for the Jonathan Edwards Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School



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# About the Authors



CHRIS ANDERSON has pastored since 1997. He is the senior pastor of Killian Hill Baptist Church in Lilburn, Georgia. He has written dozens of modern hymns published by Church Works Media, including the missions hymn, "For the Sake of His Name." Most recently, Chris has authored two full-length books: The God Who Satisfies and Panosian.



JD CROWLEY has lived in Asian cultures all his life. After 12 years of pastoring in Hawaii, he went to Cambodia in 1994 to do linguistic and mission work among the indigenous minorities there. He is the author of The Tampuan/Khmer/English Dictionary and Khmer commentaries on Matthew and Romans.



DAVID HOSAFLOOK went to Albania in 1992 on a shortterm mission trip, and he's still there, helping to evangelize people and plant churches in the wake of what was the most oppressive communist regime in eastern Europe. He recently authored The Siege of Shkodra, a history of the Ottoman-Christian struggle in Albania.



TIM KEESEE is the director of Frontline Missions International, an organization committed to advancing the gospel in the world's most difficult places by developing sustainable platforms for work and witness. He is the producer of the missions documentary series, Dispatches from the Front, and he authored the book by the same title.



JOE TYRPAK has served as a pastor of Tri-County Bible Church in Madison, Ohio, since 2005. He recently produced a DVD, The Life of David Brainerd: A Documentary, and a companion devotional. He and his wife, Hannah, have four children.

