

Eleven Factors of Success in Missions

Revelation 14:2-5

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Text

14:1 And behold, I saw a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from the sky, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of loud thunder; and the sound that I heard was like harpists playing on their harps. 3 And they sing a new song before the Throne, and before the four living beings and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the 144,000, who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 These are the ones not defiled with women, for they are virgins; these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were redeemed by Jesus from among men, firstfruits for God and for the Lamb; 5 no lie was found in their mouth, for they are blameless.

Introduction

Last week we looked at the identity of the 144,000. And every time I read about this group of missionaries my heart is stirred up to want to be more devoted to the Lord. And verses 1-5 show eleven things about these men that made them incredible tools for missions. You could think of these as eleven preconditions to healthy missions. Or you could think of them as preconditions to angels blessing our missions in verses 6-7 and Christ blessing our missions in verses 14-16. And I've summarized those eleven preconditions with eleven words.

I. Christ: the central focus for missions is Christ, not man's need (v. 1a)

The first word is "Christ." These missionaries were His footsoldiers, and it was Christ who headed up the amazing missions outreaches of AD 70 and following. Verse 1 says, "And behold, I saw a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand..." Who is the first one here? It's the Lamb. The Lamb was a symbol of Jesus, and the 144,000 was an army at His command. So His exclusive role as Savior/Lamb relates to His exclusive role as Authority/King. Those whom He died for submit to His reign. You cannot separate His priestly office from His kingly office. You cannot separate His role as Savior from His role as Lord. In other words, you can't be saved by the Lamb without following the Lamb. All by itself this is a needed corrective to missions that promote easy-believism and

get what missionaries sometimes call 'rice-Christians.'

But another implication of this clause is that missions could not happen without Jesus. They were with Him, had eyes for Him, and in verse 4 they follow the Lamb wherever He may go. The heart of missions for these men was not the needs around them, though they knew that the needs were great. But they were serving Christ as they served those needs. The heart of missions was not the lost souls headed to hell, though they no doubt were burdened for such lost souls. It was not a love for people, though they no doubt loved the lost and poured out their hearts for the lost. The heart of missions is a passion for Christ. He must be the Alpha and the Omega of missions. He must be the central focus of missions. Too many missions organizations have become man-centered, and I believe they have become man-centered because their Gospel is a man-centered semi-Pelagian Gospel.

Now we intellectually believe this to be true, but we often unwittingly find ourselves serving creation rather than serving Christ. It can happen to me as a pastor - I can get so busy and focused upon the work of serving Christ that I lose sight of the Christ whom I am serving, and I get driven by the tyranny of the urgent and I become problem focused. And focusing on problems and needs will drain the energy from your work.

But there are other ways in which sincere people can sideline Christ without intending to. For example, when seeking to influence culture away from abortion, socialism, impurity, etc., it is easy to allow the goal of success to keep us from faithfulness to Christ. If a pragmatic method might be more successful in the short run, we might be tempted to achieve the goal (whether the goal is to grow the church, do away with abortion, influence politics, etc) through a non-biblical man-centered method. The church growth movement has done this on a massive scale, making unbelieving 'seekers' dictate everything that happens in the worship service. You go to a seeker-sensitive worship service and Christ is not the central focus - the seekers are.

But I have seen the same thing in the prolife movement. Most national groups have long ago abandoned Christ's goal of complete abolishment of abortion and have set their goal to limit the number of abortions. In fact, some of these prolife ministries have been the chief opponents of the personhood amendment (which would make abortion the killing of a person). And their argument is that the population is not ready to call abortion murder. Do you see where their focus is? The question is, "What is Christ's opinion?" That's really what matters, and if our ministries are to

have Christ's blessing, we must value His opinion more than public opinion.

Let me give another example: was it a victory when Jay Sekulow¹ of the ACLJ won a Supreme Court case that originated out of Texas where a statue had a plaque with the ten commandments on it. His opponents were trying to get the plaque removed with the bogus argument that the Constitution prohibits religion from existing in the public sphere. So Sekulow argued successfully that because the plaque had been there for forty years it had acquired a secular symbolic value of secular law, and therefore the plaque had merely a secular purpose, thus not violating the Federal Court Standards? He celebrated that win as a victory. No. That is not a victory. Christ and His purposes for the law have been sidelined. It actually was a resounding defeat for Christian liberty. Jesus must be the beginning and the end of all that we do; the foundation and goal; the empowerment and focus.

Even our motive for missions needs to be Christ centered if we are not to fold under pressure. Hudson Taylor interviewed a group of men for missions in China. And one of the questions he asked them was, "And why do you wish to go as a foreign missionary?" Each one had answers that sprang from earth. One pointed to an inner compassion. Another pointed to the enormous need. Another pointed to the lost souls who were heading to hell. Taylor looked at them thoughtfully for a moment and said,

All of your motives are good, but I fear they will fail you in times of severe testing and tribulation - especially if you are confronted with the possibility of having to face death for your testimony. The only motive that will enable you to remain true is stated in 2Corinthians 5:14. Christ's love constraining you will keep you faithful in every situation.²

Think of it this way, when the people you are compassionate for start abusing you and beating you up, your compassion will disappear unless it is the supernatural compassion of Christ working through you. When your burden for the lost disappears because the lost are indifferent to your message for 20 years, the only thing that will replace that burden is Christ's supernatural burden being connected with your heart. So Christ must be within us as well as above us before us and behind us. Brothers and sisters, pray that God will raise up a missions movement in our day that is God-centered and Christ-focused.

1 See Jay Sekulow's arguments in his book, *Witnessing Their Faith: Religious Influence on the Supreme Court Justices and Their Opinions* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006). For a debate on whether he should call the ten commandments secular, see <https://aclj.org/aclj/transcript-of-pew-forum-debate-on-ten-commandments---jay-sekulow-douglas-laycock-at-national-press-club-in-washington-d-c>

2 Clipping from our daily bread. No date.

II. Submission: healthy leadership in missions comes from understanding that Christ's authority defines all other authority (vv. 1b, 4b)

The next word is "submission." The 144,000 were submissive first and foremost to Christ. Jesus called them His bondslaves in chapter 7. And He was such a glorious leader - a leader who had laid down His life for them, that they gladly laid down their lives for Christ. Their submission was a glad submission. In fact, most commentators say that this is using Old Covenant imagery of Jesus being the commander of an army of 144,000 soldiers ready for holy war. But it uses the figure of a Lamb to make clear that it is a Gospel war, not a physical war.

But one of the reasons radical submission to Christ is an essential precondition to missions is that the difficulties of missions will test our loyalty over and over.

It is also important because submission to Christ makes every other submission relative. Think of a chain of command in the military. If a Captain has specifically commanded a Sergeant not to have his squad or section do something, and the Sergeant orders his section to do it anyways, he has lost authority to make that order. Why? Because he has stepped out from under the chain of command. Authority in leadership implies submission to leadership. Matthew 8:9 indicates that you only have authority when you are under authority, and the more clear-sighted we are on our submission to Christ, the easier it will be to clarify how we should handle all other authority relationships.

So, for example, when the rulers of Israel were united in saying that these men should not preach Jesus, it would have been easy to cave under the pressure if they were not clear that submission to Jesus required disobedience to unsubmitive leaders. Such disobedience was actually true submission to the chain of command from God through civil officers to them. These leaders of Israel had stepped outside the chain of command when they commanded evangelists to cease and desist from evangelism.

But I have had Christians who don't get this and have told me that Brother Andrew was in sin when he smuggled Bibles into the Soviet Union countries back in the Iron Curtain days. They held to a view of Romans 13 that required blind obedience to civil magistrates, and if civil magistrates made it illegal to have Bibles, Christians should not have Bibles. Such Christians might think they are in submission to Christ, but they have actually rebelled

against Christ by joining the civil government in stepping outside the chain of command. True submission must be understood in missions or you will not be able to untangle numerous ethical dilemmas.

So when William Carey was told by a church leader that he must not go to missions and that God would handle missions without his help,³ his submission to Christ precluded submission to their unlawful order. When local governments in India prohibited Carey from preaching, his submission to Christ precluded submission to their unlawful order. When a wife is asked to commit a sin by her husband, her submission to Christ precludes submission to his unlawful order. If you read a history of missions you will see very faulty views of authority and submission have messed up missions in many ways.

These 144,000 men had true authority because they submitted to authority. And the authority of Christ helped to define and clarify how far they would submit to any human authority. The Jewish leaders would call them lawless because they wouldn't stop missions, but they were the truly lawful submissive people in this story. So none of what I have said is a denial of human authority, simply a limiting and defining of it.

III. Calling: the reason for missions is not men but God (v. 1c)

But this is tightly connected to the next point: calling. Without a strong sense of God's call upon our lives it is easy to give up when the going gets tough. Though the names of Father and Son on their foreheads symbolizes God's ownership of them, it's ownership for a purpose - they were called to a very specific calling. And so this also symbolizes God's call upon their lives. These men were His ambassadors; His representatives. The reason for missions is not man's call, but God's call upon our lives. Certainly God's calling needs to be confirmed in a multitude of witnesses, but it is God's call, not man's call. Man's calling can be fickle, but Romans says that God does not go back on His gifts and calling. Romans 11:29 says, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."⁴

3 I believe the exact words were, "Young man, when God chooses to save the heathens in India, he will do so without your help."

4 In Romans 1:29, the Greek word ἀμεταμέλητος means "not to be regretted" firm, or irrevocable. On the last meaning, Spick says, "'irrevocable'—is exactly its meaning in the few papyri that use the adjective. On 10 November 41, Emperor Claudius wrote to the Alexandrians: "I shall now address the disturbances and the anti-Jewish riots . . . reserving the right to bring an inflexible anger to bear against any who would start up again (reading arxomenon for arxamenon). I flatly declare to you that if you do not put an end to this murderous reciprocal furor, I shall be forced to give you a harsh demonstration of what the righteous anger of a philanthropic prince is."¹⁰ Three other attestations are of juridical actions:

Too many pastors sense the calling of their congregation much more strongly than the calling of God, and consequently they don't dare to preach on anything that might offend their members. Why? Because they are beholden to their members, called by their members, and feel like they are under the authority of their members. I have asked pastors in Omaha if they have preached on xyz topics, and the responses have been to the effect of "I wouldn't dare do that, or I would lose my job," or "I wouldn't dare do that or our offerings would dry up and we are tight." That is preaching dictated by man's call, not God's call. And I would consider such pastors to be disobedient to God's call and what Christ rebuked as being hirelings. They are there just for the job.

But a strong sense of God's calling also helps us to keep on keeping on even when everyone misrepresents and slanders us. That's what happened to first century Christians in Israel. The leaders of Israel claimed to be ambassadors of God and called Christ and Christians servants of Satan.⁵ Let me give you a sample quote of what Yohannan and the other rabbinic authorities believed. I'm quoting from the Talmud. It says,

"On the eve of Passover Jesus the Nazarene was hanged and a herald went forth before him forty days heralding, 'Jesus the Nazarene is going forth to be stoned because he practiced sorcery and instigated and seduced Israel to idolatry.

By calling Jesus a sorcerer and an idolator who was worthy of death, they hoped to intimidate Christians and embarrass Christians. And this has been an intimidation tactic that has been used down through history. Even non-Christians will throw "Judge not that you be not judged" at Christians, giving the impression that they represent Christ's heart better than you do. Of course, they are yanking that out of context. And they are also being hypocritical because they are judging you for judging.

But how many missionaries give up on missions when the going gets tough? It is a strong sense of calling that takes us through. Let me give you a down-

writers of wills or parties to contracts declaring their decisions unchangeable and irrevocable,¹¹ such as Abraham, bishop of Hermonthis, at the end of the fourth century: *hothen eis tauten hormesa ten engraphon ametameleton eschaten diathekemian asphaleian*.¹² The sense "immutable, unalterable" is confirmed by P.Lond. V, 1660, 37 (c. 353), if the restitution of C. Wessely is accepted:¹³ *asaleuton kai ametameleton kai ametanatrepton einai*; ¹⁴ and by P.Cair.Masp. 314, 3, 11, from the sixth century. These are late documents, but they provide good parallels to Rom 11:29, which has the value of a legal axiom." "Preface," TLNT, paragraph 8. [accord://read/Spicq#2417](http://read/Spicq#2417)"

5 For example, Babylonian Sanhedrin 107b says, "Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic" (Editions: Firenze II.1.8–9, Barco); Babylonian Sotah 47a says, "Jesus the Nazarene because he practiced magic" (Munich 95 edition); Babylonian Sanhedrin 43a-b says that Jesus was a sorcerer who enticed other Jews to apostasy; Babylonian Gittin 56b and 57a say that God will punish Jesus for eternity in boiling excrement: "Onkeolos son of Kolonikos... then went and raised by incanations Jesus the Nazarene. He asked... What is your punishment?... With boiling excrement, since a Master has said: Whoever mocks at the words of the Sages is punished with boiling hot excrement..."

to-earth example. Ted Engstrom wrote about a Christian businessman from America who was traveling to various mission fields and documenting what was being done. One day he was standing outside a leprosarium in Northern India watching a beautiful young missionary nurse attending to the needs of a filthy, wretched, leprous beggar. The sight of such beauty ministering to such ugliness was so incongruous to him that he didn't know what to do or say. You know what lepers look like, right? They have a disease that takes away all pain, which allows injuries and infections to play havoc. And they frequently have large portions of their face and body eaten away, with cavities, and smelly puss. He was almost nauseated by the smell and filth that she was kindly washing without any noticeably revulsion. The businessman had a camera around his neck, but he was so transfixed by what he saw that he couldn't take any pictures. Instead, he told the young nurse, "Young lady, I would not do that for a million dollars." She quickly turned to him and said, "Sir, neither would I." She would do it for Christ, but not for a million dollars. Her strong sense of call to serve Christ enabled her to get past the distastefulness of her task.

Ruth Bell Graham told a similar story in her book, *It's My Turn*. At the time she was just a missionary kid, and she was amazed at this one missionary who turned down an incredibly lucrative job. An oil company was opening a new office in China and needed a young man to run the operation. They wanted someone young, a university graduate, a proven leader, and someone fluent in Chinese. This young missionary perfectly fit their qualifications. They knew he wasn't paid much. So they offered him a salary that was ten times what he was making. He declined. They offered him more. He turned them down. Finally the agent asked, "What will you take?" He said, "It's not a question of salary. The salary is tremendous. The trouble is with the job. The job is too little. I feel that God has called me to preach the Gospel of Christ. I would be a fool to quit preaching in order to sell oil."⁶ A strong sense of his calling helped him to withstand temptation and drove him on in a difficult work.

IV. Worship: the focus of missions is not men, but God (vv. 2-3a)

The next word might surprise you. It is the word "worship." Verses 2-3 describe the worship of heaven and earth. And their worship was not man's attempt to get heaven to respond. No, the initiation for this worship comes from heaven itself. It too is God-centered. Verse 2 says,

⁶ Ruth Bell Graham, *It's My Turn* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revel Co., 1982), pp. 20-21.

And I heard a sound from the sky [or literally, from heaven], like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of loud thunder; and the sound that I heard was like harpists playing on their harps.

Heaven really knows how to worship. And the reason is that heaven is not weighed down by our flesh, the concerns of life, or other distractions. It sees Christ for who He is, and cannot help but worship. Worship is heaven's natural breath. So heaven initiates and this causes the hearts of the 144,000 on earth to worship God, despite their sorrows and their difficulties. Verse 3 says,

And they sing a new song before the Throne, and before the four living beings and the elders...

Notice again that the worship is not man-centered or seeker-sensitive. As Hebrews 12 says, those on earth are caught up in worship before the throne of God and join with the angels and saints in heaven. It is God-centered and heaven oriented. It is only when worship reaches heaven and focuses upon God that it has any power about it whatsoever.

Now, the fact that these 144,000 were even worshiping is an amazing thing, when you think about it. After all, God has allowed them to go through this persecution. We saw before that God had allowed 2/3rds of the church in Israel to be wiped out, and far more of the Gentile church. And these 144,000 knew that they would likely soon face martyrdom. Yet they worshiped. No doubt most of these people had friends or relatives who had been killed, and God allowed it, yet they worshiped. They had just gone through what the Bible describes as the greatest tribulation this world would ever see. So how were they able to respond to heaven's worship with their own joyful worship?

When bad things happen to you, it is easy to find the joy leaking out and before long, we begin to get negative, and eventually we lose our fire.

Robertson McQuilkin gave this as his own testimony. He said,

Life was heavy on me. My dearest friend and intimate companion, my delightful wife Muriel, was slipping away, one painful loss at a time, as Alzheimer's disease ravaged her brain. Just as the full impact of what was happening to us hit home, the life of Bob, our eldest son, was snuffed out in a diving accident.

Two years later, to care for Muriel, I left my life work at its peak. I was numb. Not bitter, let alone angry. Why should I be? That's the way life is, life in a broken world. But the passion in my love for God had evaporated, leaving a residue of resignation where once had been vibrant faith.

I knew that I was in deep trouble, and I did the only thing I knew to do - I went away to a mountain hideaway for prayer and fasting. It took about twenty-four hours to shake free of preoccupation with my own wounds and to focus on the excellencies of God. As I did, slowly love began to be rekindled. And with love came joy.

I wrote God a love letter, naming forty-one of his marvelous gifts to me, spotlighting

eleven of his grandest acts of history, and exulting in ten of his characteristics that exceed my imagination. Surely he enjoyed my gratitude - who doesn't appreciate gratitude? But I discovered something else. Something happened to me. I call it the reflex action of thanksgiving. My love flamed up from the dying embers, and my spirit soared. I discovered that ingratitude impoverishes - but that a heavy heart lifts on the wings of praise.⁷

Before these 144,000 could be equipped and ready to engage in their difficult call to missions, they had to first be captured by God's love and respond to this ocean of love by swimming in it and rejoicing in it and being transformed by it. John Piper spoke to this issue in his very last sermon. He defined missions as seeking the worship of the nations to rise to God. But before missionaries can do that, they too must know how to worship. He said,

Seeking the worship of the nations is fueled by the joy of our own worship. You can't commend what you don't cherish. You can't proclaim what you don't prize. Worship is the fuel and the goal of missions.⁸

What a wonderful statement. "Worship is the fuel and the goal of missions." What did David do when he was burned out and tempted to get cynical? He worshiped. He worshiped even though he did not feel like it, and by doing so was fighting for the joy that was His heritage. And in Psalm after Psalm you see this mighty warrior of God washing away cynicism, sorrow, despair, and hurt in the wonder of a God who is as grand as our God. It is impossible to be caught up to Zion in true Spirit-led worship and not be strengthened for the task on earth. Until you have experienced it, what I am saying may seem trite and theoretical, but it is anything but that. Hebrews 4:16 commands us, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Worship helps us in time of need. It is absolutely essential that missionaries learn to bath in the splendor and perfections of God as they worship in public and in personal devotions.

V. Joy: the strength of missions is exhibited in supernatural joy (v. 3a)

But that in turn gives joy, and verse 3 begins with the joyful response of these 144,000. "And they sing a new song before the Throne, and before the four living beings and the elders..." Any time the phrase "new song" was used in the Old Testament, it was a joyful celebration of what God had done for them. It was a fresh appreciation for His character and work. We are headed to endless joy and endless love and our lives right now should be

7 Robert J. Morgan has these notes from McQuilken recorded in Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 814.

8 <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/missions-exists-because-worship-doesnt-a-bethlehem-legacy-inherited-and-bequeathed>

characterized by some of both. On joy, John Piper writes, "The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. "The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!" (Psalm 97:1). "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy! (Psalm 67:3-4). . . Missions begins and ends in worship."⁹

And joy strengthens us when persecution comes and when life gets tough. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Joy does give us strength and energy. So why do we lose our joy? Billy Sunday said, "If you have no joy in your religion, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere." Leaks can occur anywhere in a bucket. We can leak joy by shifting our focus from Christ to our problems (point number 1). We can leak out our joy when we feel the tug-of-war of conflicting loyalties, but if we have settled point II in our hearts, that leak won't happen. Our joy can leak out of us when we start doubting our calling and wishing for something else (point III). It can happen on any of these points.

VI. Guidance: direction in missions comes from knowing Christ and being taught by Him (v. 3b-c)

The next word is "Guidance." Or I could just as easily have used the word "communion." This guidance or communion can be seen by the newness or freshness of the new song and also by the fact that no one but them was able to learn this new song. They have a connection with heaven that others do not have. This isn't prophetic inspiration. By AD 70 that had ceased. This was in effect a secret experience between them and God. Commentators point out that this is very similar to Revelation 2:17 where overcomers are promised that they can eat the hidden manna (unbelievable intimacy with God), be given a white stone (incredible invitation), and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it (incredible relationship). It is another metaphor for closeness to God; communion with God, and being guided by God's hand. John 10:27 says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Psalm 25:14 says, "The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." So we are not talking about inerrant prophecy; we are talking normal guidance.

Does God continue to guide His people and commune with them? Yes He does. He does it in our lives all the time. Nothing but the Bible is infallible, but missionaries often sense God's leading to specific people. Let me read a recent account from a Reformed minister here in the USA by the name of Norm Wakefield. It's a bit longer of a read, but I think you will appreciate

⁹ John Piper, "Let the Nations Be Glad," 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), p. 36.

where I am going with this. He said,

As soon as I lifted the 40-pound bag with my left arm and slung it into the trunk, I knew I had made a mistake. I heard sounds from my shoulder and felt a pain shoot from my shoulder to my neck. I should have used two hands. I've done this before when lifting luggage, and I should have known better. I thought I had pulled my neck out of line, so I immediately called my chiropractor to see if I could stop in for an adjustment before we boarded the plane for 24 hours of traveling to Australia. Thankfully, they could work me in as the last appointment of the day.

After being adjusted and while I was going through some muscle therapy, I prayed and asked my Father in heaven what this was all about. Why did I do such a stupid thing? What was His purpose behind this injury prior to such an important ministry trip? How could I make much of Jesus in this situation?

As I listened to the Lord and watched Amanda, the aid who was helping patients in the therapy room, the thought came to me that God loved her and wanted her to know it. I knew that Amanda was not a believer in Christ and that she was leaving the chiropractic office within a week or so. My wife had discovered that information about her earlier in the day when Amanda had helped her.

The thought came to ask her if she knew what her name meant (we have a daughter, Amanda, so I knew the meaning of her name). When asked she replied joyfully, "Worthy to be loved." I commented that she had a wonderfully meaningful name. Strangely, she became quite transparent. She volunteered that when she went to college, she wanted to go by her first name instead of Amanda, to signal a new start in her life. She said things didn't change in her life while she was there, so once she graduated, she decided to revert to being called Amanda.

As she finished taking off the therapy tabs, I told her that while I was sitting there, I had been praying for her and thinking about her with God. It startled her and interested her. I continued, "I think God wants you to know that He loves you and wants to make His presence known to you today." At that, she was speechless. "I don't know what is going on in your life, but perhaps knowing that God is thinking about you will be encouraging to you. May I pray for you briefly?" I asked.

I reached out my hand and she gripped mine firmly as I prayed. As I paused to listen about how to pray, I became aware of God's love and compassion for her. It welled up in my heart and brought tears to my eyes as I thought of His love for her. "Father, I want to thank You for working circumstances in my life today that brought me back in this office to meet and pray with Amanda. Thank you for her care for me. She needs to know of Your love for her in Jesus Christ today, so would You make Your presence and Your love known to her? Pour out Your love in her heart and encourage her by Your presence. Amen."

When I looked up at Amanda, she too was in tears. As we both wiped the tears from our eyes, I think we both were aware of God's presence. There were not words to describe what happened in that moment. All I knew was that Jesus desired to express His love to Amanda, and I had the privilege of being His channel of love to her. I don't know if I'll ever know what happened in her heart, because she will no longer be working in that office once I return. However, that isn't what matters. The important thing was that the Spirit of God was expressing the love of Jesus in and through me to Amanda. God used the occasion of an injury, even one that could have been prevented had I been more thoughtful, to move us into the space where His presence and love could be manifested to

both of us.

What a privilege to be moved by His Spirit to make much of Jesus in a God-orchestrated circumstance. This is what I call a Jesus Story. Things like this don't happen naturally; they are supernatural works of God in our lives. Ephesians 2:10 comes to mind. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." This was one of those works that God prepared for me to walk in for His glory.

God wants to share His love through His children. He uses all the circumstances in our lives to bring this to pass. I'm telling you this Jesus Story to encourage you that God also may want to share His love through you! I've discovered that in any circumstance, if I ask, "How can I make much of Jesus Christ in this situation?", my Father in heaven will reveal a way to do that. It's a work God has prepared beforehand for me that wouldn't have been revealed had those circumstances not occurred or had I not asked for help to make much of Jesus.

...I want to encourage you, if you are a Christ-follower, to be intentional about living to express His love with Him each day. You'll find that such intentional obedience to Jesus' command to love as you have been loved (John 13:34) will result in a fullness of joy and much glory to God in your life. May God make you aware of opportunities in life to share His love through Jesus Christ.

OK, that was a sermon within a sermon. But I read it because you can see all of these points illustrated in that story. If Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of our ministry (point I) and if we are submissive to Him and sensitive to listening to Him (point II), and if we sense God's call to ministry upon our lives (point III), and have learned to worship and bask in God's love (point IV), and have His joy (point V), and sense His guidance (point VI) how can we do anything other than overflow with the living waters of Christ? These points are not theoretical. They are preconditions to supernatural missions.

VII. Security: security in missions comes from God's particular love and particular redemption (v. 3d)

But let's learn a few more facts about these Jewish missionaries. Verse 3 says that they "had been redeemed from the earth" and verse 4 says "These were redeemed by Jesus from among men." Both the English and the Greek indicate that this is limited atonement or what some of us prefer to call 'particular redemption' (one of the five points of Calvinism). The word for redeemed itself means to acquire a slave from the market place. Those not purchased remain the property of Satan, but all those purchased belong to Christ. That's what we mean by limited atonement - who did He intended to save out of the slave market? Was it those whom the Father had not given to Him? No. And there is a preposition in both verses that doubly emphasizes that not all were redeemed. It is the word "out of." In verse 3 they were redeemed out of the land of Israel. And in verse 4 it literally says, they were

redeemed out of mankind. That implies that mankind as a whole was not redeemed.

How is this a huge help to missions? It helps in three ways. First, missionaries who don't doubt God's love for them are much more stable. And as many theologians have pointed out, particular redemption is tightly connected with particular love. It's not very comforting to a wife for a husband to say that he loves her like he loves all women. And in Ephesians 5 when discussing the particular redemption of the church by Jesus He ties it tightly to the particular love that He has for each one in His bride. It's a husband's love for His bride, not a general love for everyone. It's not very comforting to think I am loved and purchased in exactly the same way as those in hell were. But if I know that His redemption was not a failure and each one for whom He gave His life will spend eternity with Him, it gives great security. And the stability that this doctrine gave to the missionaries sent out from Calvin's Geneva was astounding. The stability this gave to the Calvinistic missionaries of the 1800s was tremendous.

But a second way this helps missions is that it gives confidence that your preaching is guaranteed to reach the elect. If you are a missionary, it gives you confidence that God will apply this redemption through the preaching of the Word. It will happen. It's not a maybe. God saves all those for whom Christ died and He does so by the preaching and sharing of the Gospel. So it gives security and confidence in our preaching. I remember when I was an Arminian witnessing on the streets of Calgary every week. And when someone would come to Christ I would feel a sense of pride - I had a notch in my slingshot, so to speak. But when people didn't come to Christ, I was constantly second guessing myself and wondering if they would have become Christians if I had worded myself differently. I had a great deal of anxiety because I had a man-centered Gospel. That was a man-centered approach to missions. Calvinism gives a God-centered approach that ignites real confidence that conversions of the elect will happen by His providence.

The third way it helps missions is that the confidence of the missionary rubs off on the disciples, who don't tend to doubt their salvation as easily. Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37)

VIII. Purity: confidence in missions comes from holy living (v. 4a)

The next word is "purity." Verse 4 says, "These are the ones not defiled with

women." In other words, they had kept themselves pure from fornication. It should be encouraging to young men that this struggle against lust is possible to win. These were not theoretical people, or one-in-a-million people. This was a huge group of young men who had managed by God's grace to keep themselves pure from lust. We do not need to be slaves to our lusts. We can remain undefiled. And what is true of young men can be equally true of young women. You can have the victory in Christ Jesus.

But the reason I say that this is a precondition to success in missions is that lack of purity removes all confidence because the Holy Spirit is grieved. 1 John 2:19 says we have assurance before God when we keep pure. And verse 21 says, "if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God." Confidence in missions comes from holy living.

But secondly, transformation of lives with the resulting purity of living is one of the outcomes of genuine salvation. Carnal Christians should be an anomaly. The angel told Joseph, "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Too many missionaries preach easy-decisionalism where you get a ticket to heaven by making a decision and who cares how you live? In contrast, Titus 2:11-15 tells us that the grace of God that brings salvation teaches us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." That's what salvation grace teaches us; it teaches us holiness. In other words, you cannot separate sanctification from justification. All those truly saved in justification will begin to be sanctified. And any missions worthy of the name will produce holy disciples.

IX. Consecration: dedication in missions comes from giving all to Christ (v. 4)

The next word is "consecration." Dedication in missions comes from giving all to Christ. With the rich young ruler, Christ asked that he give away his wealth, but that is not a paradigm for all. For him that was an idol that needed to be destroyed. With these men, because they were soon to be martyrs, Christ asked them to stay single, but that is not a paradigm for all. The normal paradigm is for us to get married. Christ called them to singleness only because he called them to Kamikaze evangelism. Verse 4 says, "for they are virgins." They weren't married. And this enabled them to be devoted to one cause until they died a martyrs death.

God commands most men and women to get married, but if you are an exception and God has given you the gift of celibacy, then ask God what

ways this can free you up to serve Him. The things you might be asked to sacrifice to the Lord may be different than what these men sacrificed. He may not even ask you to sacrifice anything, but daily give Him your rights, your health, your possessions, your family, your house, your everything. I love the prayer of the early church father, Ignatius. He prayed, "Take, Lord, and receive, all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To You, O Lord, I return it. All is yours. Dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this is sufficient for me." Tell the Lord that you want to be sold out to Him. And the fact of the matter is that you can be just as sold out as a married person as these unmarried men were. It's a heart issue. But it should be obvious why consecration is needed for the sacrifices of missions.

X. Eschatology: The hope of missions is not based on present circumstances (v. 4 - "firstfruits")

The next word is "eschatology." That's simply a big word that means God's promises for the future. And I get that word from the word "firstfruits." In verse 4 He calls them, "firstfruits for God and for the Lamb." In our previous study we saw that a firstfruits was a small basket of grain that was offered up to the Lord in gratefulness for a coming full harvest. So if the 144,000 were the firstfruits of Israel's salvation, the full harvest will be magnificently larger. It gives faith and hope for the future. And I talked about that adequately last week.

But here is the point: missions without faith and hope is weak, and the only way you can have a full faith and hope in the future is if you understand God's promises for the future. This is why missionaries must study eschatology. This is why my missions support-organization, Biblical Blueprints, promotes Postmillennial eschatology. It gives a faith to expect great things from God and to attempt great things for God. You can only have faith to believe great things of God if you know that God has promised great things for the future. Eschatology is not an unimportant thing. It generates faith and hope that sustained missionaries like David Livingstone, William Carey, and numerous other Postmillennial missionaries of the 1800s. It is an important precondition to the kind of robust missions that these men engaged in.

XI. Integrity: attraction to missions comes from consistency in word and conduct

The last word is "integrity." Verse 5 says, "no lie was found in their mouth, for they are blameless." Hypocrites are people who preach one thing and live something totally different. And hypocrisy will drive people away from the Gospel message. But when you have missionaries with these eleven characteristics, they will be so different from the world that there will be an attractiveness about them that will draw others to ask questions. Attraction to missions comes from consistency in word and conduct. And Romans 11 wants unbelievers to have a magnetic attraction to us. He wants our lives to be so different that people become jealous of the Gospel that we have. He speaks of the Gentiles being jealous of what the Christian Jews have and the unbelieving Jews becoming jealous of what the believing Gentiles have.

In fact, statistics show that a majority of people come to Christ by seeing first hand the transformation of life that has happened to a relative, friend, or associate. It's hard to deny the power of the Gospel when you see numerous people completely changed for the better by it.

So those are the eleven preconditions to powerful missions. And even though you may not be called to be a missionary, you can still aspire to have more and more of the reality of these eleven words in your lives. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen.