

“What Has God Called *ME* To?” Romans 15:15-24 // *20th and Beyond*

Chris leads one of our church planting teams in Central Asia and when I hear him talk, I simultaneously feel both inspired and burdened. Here he’s telling us about new believers in a church we’ve planted who have chosen this last year to stay in a very dangerous part of the world when they could leave so they can be a witness to friends and neighbors there. If they leave, there’s no other way for people there to hear. That’s incredible, and we need to pray for them.

But here’s the burden: there are so many places like theirs in the world with little to no gospel witness—when I was an m in SE Asia, sometimes I used to get on my motorcycle and just go out driving for the afternoon (picture Tom Cruise in Top Gun, just a much less cooler version), and I could drive for hours and encounter village after village where no one there had ever heard about Jesus. There were no churches. No one there had ever met a Christian. No one had ever seen a Bible. No one had ever—or probably would ever—encounter someone who would tell them about Jesus.

And here’s the thing: to get the gospel to these places is hard. It means putting yourself in unfamiliar places; sometimes dangerous places. One of the members on Chris’s team, another Summit member, told me that at his small house church gathering there in Central Asia, Chris challenged them: *“This week, write down 20 names of people you know that need Jesus, pray for them all week, and then bring their names back next weekend...”* Then the next weekend he said, ‘OK, look at this list, choose the person least likely to kill you or turn you in to the police, and ask God for the boldness to share Christ with them this week.’ I’m confident that’s never happened in your small group. That’s how they do outreach in some of those places.

Today I want to talk about God’s call on some of your lives to get the gospel to places like that.

If you have a Bible, open it to Romans 15 (we’ll be back in 1 Corinthians next week, but Romans 15 today), where Paul discusses his own personal call. And get out a pen if you have one. I want to give you the **2 factors** that go into discerning the call of God on your life. **God has a call for each of you (1 Cor 12 tells us that); a specially appointed gifting and ministry, just for you.**

Here in Romans 15 Paul discusses his: verse 15: But on some points I have written to you very boldly, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable... 17 In Christ Jesus, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. 18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in bringing the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed.

19 From Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; 20 and thus I make it my ambition (my personal ambition; my unique contribution to the Kingdom of God) to

preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, 21 but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." (a quote from Isa 52:15)

22 *This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.* 23 *But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions...* 24 *I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain.* (a place that, in those days, had yet to be penetrated with the gospel)

The first thing I want you to notice is the extremely personal way Paul talks about his ministry. Did you see it?

- Vs. 15, *Grace given to me by God for ministry*
- Vs. 16, *My offering*
- Vs. 17, *My work for God*
- Vs. 18, *What Christ has accomplished through me*
- Vs. 19, *I have fulfilled the ministry...* (given to me)
- Vs. 20, *My ambition*

Paul felt like something personal had been given to him; there were lots of things to do in the Kingdom of God; but Paul's commission was to preach Christ in places where Christ's name had never been heard. The gospel is that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but someone has to personally receive it for that to become theirs. And Paul discerned that his calling was to get to those who had never heard.

Look at what he said in vs. 19. Paul says, *From Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ...* vs. 23, *"I no longer have any room for work in these regions..."* (here it is on a map) See how big that is? This region contained 37 major cities (plus hundreds and hundreds of smaller villages), with a combined population of over 500,000 people.¹ There were, at most, a dozen churches there, with a combined total of around 500 members. 500 believers out of half a million and Paul says, **"My work is DONE here?"** How on earth could he say that? 500 out of 500,000 and the work is done? Were all these Christians mature? Were all the justice issues addressed here? **Hardly!** I mean, Rome was so anti-gospel that Paul would eventually be executed there for following Jesus. Rome had all kinds of justice issues. But Paul was called to take Christ to places where he'd never been named and so he said, "My work here is done."

That calling to take Christ where he'd never been named became for Paul a compass for decisions. He said to the Romans, "I couldn't come to you before, but now I can, because you are en route to Spain where they've never heard, and that's what God has called me to focus on: those who have never heard."

¹ <https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/apostle-paul-all-cities-visited-large-map.html>; <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/holy-ambition--2>. The numbers here are hard to say with absolute precision. One credible source says Capernaum alone was "a thousand at most" while others say it was between 12-15 thousand. Obviously, with population estimates of individual regions wavering to such degrees, after doing the math, the "Jerusalem to Illyricum" area could have covered anywhere from 700,000 to about 2 million. Jerusalem itself has estimates of 20-80 thousand. Either way, it seems more than safe to say (with the most conservative guesses) that this area covers thousands of towns/villages and "hundreds of thousands" of people.

Factor #1 in discerning the call of God on your life...

1. Where is the Spirit of God moving (in my life)?

I often explain to college students that there's a widespread myth in the church--I call it the Cheerios myth of seeking God's will for your life--this, by the way, is one of the 6 illustrations Pastor Danny talked about last weekend that I recycle every few months.

- **The myth is this:** that calling is a sacred privilege reserved for a select few super Christians conveyed through a mystical manifestation: that is, you're staring at your Cheerios one morning and they suddenly spell out: "Pastor. School teacher. Missionary..." and this is how God calls you into his service if that's what he wants, and if you don't have an experience like that, well, you're just not called--just be a good person, go to church, pay attention and your tithes. That myth is untrue. Sure--if God ever spells out something to you in your Cheerios, by all means you should pay attention. But I have stared at my Cheerios for years and all it's ever spelled out is "OOOOOOOOOO..."
- That's the myth; here's the truth: All of us are called. The call to leverage your life for the Great Commission was included in the call to follow Jesus.
 - Jesus said in Matt 4:19...
 - In Matt 28:18–20 Jesus' last words to all of us were, "Go, and make disciples of all the nations."
 - So we say, **The question is no longer if you're called; the question now is only where and how.**
- A lot of Christians, are sitting around, waiting on a still-small voice when they really have a pretty straightforward verse.
- If you've accepted Jesus, you've accepted the call to mission, because the call to engage in the Great Commission was *included* in the call to follow Jesus.

So, we teach that here, and I believe it. But, in saying that, what I don't want us to lose is that the Spirit of God does reveal to us, in dynamic and sometimes mystical ways, what part of the mission belongs to each of us.

You see, there's **simply no way for one person to be responsible for everything in the mission of God**. Early in my Christian life, I thought I was responsible for everything. I'd hear a message about some good work in the Kingdom--poverty relief, ministering to the homeless, taking care of foster children, overseas missions, teaching, apologetics, leading public worship, mercy work. And I thought I was supposed to give myself to all of them. There's just no way any one person can take on all of those things as a life calling.

At TSC, we often say, **"Not everything that comes from heaven has your name on it."** It may indeed come from heaven, and you should be aware of it and supportive of it, it's just not for you to FOCUS on. **But, HEAR THIS: something does have your name on it, and you have to figure out what that is and get after it.**

You say, "How do I know what that thing is?" You typically find out, like Paul did, through prayer, engagement in ministry, involvement in the church--God just starts putting something on your heart here and your passion for it grows. I always use the example of Nehemiah whose heart grew heavier and heavier for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. In **chapter 2 of his book, Nehemiah tells us** he thought it about all the time; he wept

over it; it's where his heart went in prayer and what he dreamed about being a part of one day. That happens to you about something.

One of the reasons we are fasting together right now is to give you greater sensitivity to what the Lord may be calling you to; to give God space to reveal to you what he wants from you. (*You realize, btw, that the point of fasting is not to make you more acceptable to God* (Christians sometimes think that--"Oh, God, look at me, I'm hungry now; I'm suffering, now you have to pay attention to me!" NO! God has already made you fully acceptable to him in Christ; in Christ, there's nothing you could do--fasting or otherwise, to make yourself more acceptable to him.) **The purpose of fasting is not to make you more acceptable to God, but more receptive to his Spirit.** You fast to be able to hear him better. To prove to yourself and him that you want his direction more than you want anything else in life. And listen--right now, if you are paying attention, God is moving on some of you for a particular ministry. He's putting a certain people, or a certain place, or people in a certain career field, on your heart.

I have a friend who has adopted five kids, four from Ukraine and one from Kenya (and he says you have no trouble telling which ones are which!). The four from Ukraine he adopted at once. When I asked how he came to that decision, he told me that his wife and he knew that those who had received the gospel should become like the gospel--that they should seek to show the same kindness to others Jesus has shown to them.

But they wondered how specifically they should do this. I mean, there are so many needs in the world. Well, as they were praying about it, my friend was reading Ephesians 1:5 where Paul explains that God had adopted believers into his family out of the orphanage of sin. And then he came to 5:1 where Paul says, "Be an imitator of God," and he thought, "What better way to imitate the gospel than to adopt a child in need into my family?"

Well, the next summer he goes on a mission trip to Ukraine, and while there, he visited an orphanage. The orphanage director told him that someone had just brought in a set of four siblings. The kids, ages 2-8, were about to be split up and placed in orphanages around the country unless someone came forward to take all four--but that was such a huge thing nobody would do it. A worker brought the kids out to him, and what he saw were four scared little children, all holding hands. They thought they were being called in for some kind of discipline. In that moment, my friend said, he heard the Spirit of God say, "Those are your kids." His wife wasn't even with him. He called his wife and said, "Hey, I've got some big news." (And his wife was supportive. Some of you ladies just looked at your husband and said, "You are never going on a mission trip.")

"I know I can't take care of all the orphans in the world," my friend told me. "But God told me to take care of these four."²

² From my book *Jesus, Continued...*

“Those are your kids.” If you’re listening to the Spirit, he will say that to you about something. Not everything that comes from heaven has your name on it; but something does, and it is your job to figure that out and get after it. There is something about which you are supposed to say, “This is *my* work for God. My offering. My ministry. Those are my kids.”

Maybe God is telling you to start a small group in your apartment complex. Maybe you've been watching the news and God has laid the refugee population on your heart--the nations that have come right to our back door! Maybe you sense, like my friend, that your family should take a step towards fostering or adopting. Daniel Rose, our student pastor at our CPC, told me this week that for years he’s had a clear and unmistakable burden for middle and high school students in North Raleigh. Or maybe, just maybe, like Paul, and God is calling you to break ground in a new place, a hard place, in a place where Christ is not known.

Factor #1 in figuring out the call of God on your life is asking, “Where is the Spirit of God moving?” Factor #2, though, **EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANTLY**:

2. What is the Word of God saying (to the church)?

I say, **“Even more significantly,”** because I want you to see that even more important to Paul in his call than what the Spirit said to him was what the Word of God said to everybody. In Vs. 20, when Paul explains why he’s doing what he’s doing, look at how he justifies it:

20 My ambition is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named...²¹ ***for, as it is written, “Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.”***

- “The reason I am doing this is because this is what God said in the Bible must happen.” Do you remember how Paul was called? Paul was on his way to Damascus when God knocked him down, blinded him with light, and appeared to him in a vision and said, “Paul, take my message to the Gentiles.” If that had happened to me, and I were asked to explain why I was doing what I was doing, this is where I would point. Wouldn’t you? “J.D., why are you a pastor?” “Well, one day I was riding my skateboard to class, when suddenly a bright light knocked me on my rear end and then Jesus appeared to me and said, ‘J.D., be a pastor...’” If that had happened to me, that’s where I’d start! But friend, in this WHOLE chapter, Paul never even brings up that Damascus Road experience! Instead, he anchors his calling--he justifies it--in what God said in the Bible. **WHY?** Because he’s trying to show us that the most significant factor in determining the will of God in our lives is not what we feel, but what the Word says. In fact, write this down: **You’ll never properly discern what the Spirit of God is saying to you until you know what the Word of God says to everybody.**
- **Look at the verses right before this: Paul quotes from 3 other places in the Old Testament to justify what he’s doing:**
 - **Vs. 11 (For) as it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”** (that’s from Deuteronomy)
 - **10 And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”** (that a quote from the Psalms)

- **12 And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come... in him will the Gentiles hope.”** (a quote from Isaiah)
- Here’s what is significant about that: The Jewish people divided the Old Testament into 3 major sections: the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. **Paul quotes from all 3 of them to justify his calling. It's as if he is saying, “ALL of the Old Testament is organized around this truth--that people who have never heard must hear.** If God organized his Bible around that theme, why wouldn’t I organize my life around that as well?”
- **You’ll never properly discern what the Spirit is saying to you until you know what the Word says to the whole church.** You’ll never accurately interpret what he’s doing in your life until you understand what he’s doing on earth.
 - You see, when it comes to the will of God, we often function like narcissists--It’s all about **me and my life** and reaching my potential and finding my happiness. We’re all into Enneagrams, personality profiles, strengths-finders and whatever. I’m special; I’m unique; I’m a snowflake. What’s MY purpose?” Now, can those things be useful? Of course. I’m an Enneagram 8, ENTJ type D. **But before those things are relevant, we have to understand what God is doing in the world and conform our lives to that.** The OT scholar Christopher J.H. Wright says, **“We often ask, ‘Where does God fit into the story of my life?’ when the real question is, ‘Where does my little life fit into the great story of God’s mission?’”**
- **Paul says, “God’s main purpose in the world,** cover to cover, and repeated in the Great Commission, is that people who have never heard the gospel have a chance to hear.”

The Joshua Project reports that today there are 7,398 “Unreached” people groups, making up 3.2 billion people on our planet. Again, the gospel is that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but someone has to personally receive it for that to become theirs, and “Unreached” means that as it stands now, there is no legitimate way someone there could hear the gospel before they die. No one is there focused on reaching them. There are no churches there. Often, there’s not even a copy of the Bible in their language. The vast majority (85%) of these least reached groups live in the 10/40 window--Asia, North Africa, the Middle East--and, get this, less than 10% of missionary work is done among these people. 90% of our efforts are focused on places like this where there are churches on every corner.

We have needs here, sure. But think, for a minute, of **all the ways someone here can access the gospel.** You can hear it in podcasts, on radio stations, TV programs, books, magazines; there are churches on every corner; there’s likely a Christian living in your neighborhood. In those “unreached” people groups, none of that exists. They will pass into eternity without so much as even having the chance to respond to Jesus. Going there doesn’t mean Westernizing them, or making them Americans, certainly not colonizing them. It just means giving them the opportunity to hear that a Savior died for their sins so they wouldn’t have to.

This is the focal point of what God is doing on earth, and Paul recognizes that it must have a special place in the life of a believer. I hear a lot of people today object to international missions because there’s so much work *here*. And I agree, there is a lot of work left to do here. But remember, Paul looked at this big swath of

people from Jerusalem to Illyricum, with over half a million people and less than 500 believers, and said, “The work is done here. I’ve got to take Christ where he’s never been named.” That has to be the church’s priority.

And so some of you are like, “Well, um, J.D., why don’t you just go?” Well, I don’t want to contradict what I said before. I know that God has not called every single one of us to focus our lives on this. But **surely in a church this size God is moving on some of you for this. Listen:** I’m grateful for every single one of you who feels called to engage in ministries around here, to reach people in your profession; I’m grateful for every single person who steps forward to help us plant a new campus or a new North American church. But why are there so few willing to go where Christ is not named and preach his gospel there? To go to the hard places? The Unreached places? Why would God leave so many of us HERE in a place of so much access when there’s so many over there with no access at all? Is God that bad at math? *Why would he keep so many in a place where there is so much and send so few to places where there’s so little?*

Why are there so few men? Women still outnumber men going to these places 4 to 1.

It can’t be that he’s not calling. It must mean we’re not listening.

I know it’s not easy--It’s sometimes lonely. It’s often hard. A lot of times dangerous. I know that from experience. For many of the places you go, people don’t want you there. **So, why would you do this to your life?**

- Because life is short. You’re going to blink and life will be over and you and I are going to be standing in eternity wondering what we did with our lives. **“Only one life to live, ‘twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”**
- **You say, “Well, but that work sounds impossible.** I don’t know how to begin to try to persuade people there to turn to Jesus.” **Yeah, I get that. And I feel that, from experience. But what you’ll find is that the Word does the work.** All we do is sow it. The Word does the work.
 - **A pastor friend of mine shared with me** that there was a missionary from their church in a city in Central Asia, and he had gone to a city to give out New Testaments. He gave one to a guy on the street who commented on how amazing the paper was and how it would be perfect for rolling cigarettes. He asked if he could have a copy. The missionary at first said, “No,” because he knew what the guy would use it for, but then he said, “I’ll tell you what. I’ll give you this book, even knowing that you’ll use it to roll cigarettes, but you have to promise me one thing before I do. You have to promise that before you use a page to roll a cigarette, you’ll read what’s written on it. The guy said, “You’ll really give it to me then?” The M said “yes, but you have to promise me that.” The missionary came back a month later and saw that same guy. He asked him if he’d kept his promise. Guy said, “Well, I smoked my way through Matthew. Then I smoked my way through Mark and Luke. Then I started to smoke my way through John, but I got to chapter 3 and read vs. 16 and it all made sense. *For God so loved the world...* He loved ME! There was a God who was seeking me and so I stopped smoking the Bible but kept reading it and if you’ll help me, I want to give him my life.”

- **FTR, I wouldn't advocate that method of evangelism;** I'm just telling you that the Word has power. God doesn't need your ability in this hostile world, he only needs your availability.

So, I'll say again: Is there anybody listening to me who feels your heart stir when we talk about those who have never heard? When you hear the story I shared last week of Samantha, who tells us that last year 186 people professed faith through her ministry in one of the red light districts of South Asia, and now she's seen a tiny new church planted there comprised of women who had previously been victims of the sex trade--are there some of you who, when you hear that story, your heart stirs and you say, "I want to do that!"?

To our college students, I often say: One of the great things about your generation is that it is a cause-driven generation.

- You want to eradicate poverty. Extend human rights. End global warming. Save the turtles from plastic straws.
- And **many of those causes are good and worthy ones, and I commend you.** But for the Christian who actually believes the Bible, one cause supersedes them all. And **that cause is advocated on every page of every genre of this book:** The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
- **As John Piper says,** relieving any type of suffering is a good and worthy goal, and Christians should care about all of them. But the worst kind of suffering—the kind that deserves our most earnest attention—is eternal suffering. That's the greatest and most pressing of all the causes.

Is there anyone here who senses, "I am supposed to take him where he's never been named?" Anyone?

Now, I want to say something really important to you in light of our 20th anniversary last week:

The Spirit of God has given the Summit Church a unique calling to take Christ to unreached places

It's clear that God has given the Summit a unique calling to us. He's called all churches to this, of course, but you heard it last week that God has written this in our story from the beginning, which is not true of every church.

- **It started with Sam James, who planted this church en route to Vietnam in 1962.** Think for a minute about Vietnam in 1962. I know most of you weren't alive then, but in 1962 Vietnam was one of the most unreached, most dangerous places in the world. And that's where our founding pastor went. He preached one message at our church: Isa 54:2-3, and told the church God had called them to expand their borders to bring in the nations. And then he left that afternoon to serve in Vietnam for 54 years. You heard all this last week. That's the legacy we have received.
- And then there's my own calling! I often say that my call didn't start as a call to the pastorate; it started as a call to the mission field. And here's the thing: God never released his call on me to the Unreached mission field. He just redirected it. He showed me that how I fulfill it is as one who sends.

Summit, you realize what we have experienced here in this area goes so, so far beyond just good leadership.

I'll remind you what I told you last week: Currently, we have 300 people (men, women, and kids) serving in 65 different cities around the world outside the US, which, to our knowledge, is more than any other church in the United States. We have 6X the number of missionaries as the IMB's 2nd partner. For the last five years we've averaged sending 25 long-term missionaries every year. I need you to understand that a healthy sending church would be ecstatic to see 25 people go in their lifetime!

I do NOT share that to congratulate you, or to pull off some kind of humble brag about our great leadership accomplishments. I know it's not our great leadership, and I know that because we've tried a lot of other good things in our church that we haven't experienced nearly that kind of success in--same leadership, different results. So I feel safe in saying it's not our great leadership. The only explanation for our success in this area is that God has called us to it. Years ago he said this to Sam James, and to Dr. Keith Eitel, and to me, and to some of you. **And faithful is he who called us, who also has done it.** "All our lives he has been faithful..."

I also share that with you because I want us to recognize this as a legitimate gifting of God. Paul told Timothy to "stir up the spiritual gift that had been given to him through the laying on of hands." This is clearly a gift we have received, that we must stir it up. Listen: **the Christian life is basically figuring out what God is doing and joining him in it. It's not you going out, doing stuff for God,** and then asking God to bless it. Clearly, God is doing something special here with this. So we want to join him in this.

Also, one more thing: If we have 300 of our people living in nations across the globe, that requires something of us in terms of care. We who send **have a responsibility to care for those he's sending.** I often use the example of William Carey who told the English Baptist churches before he left, "I'll dangle for you on the end of that rope in India, but you have to promise to hold securely to the other end." Some of us are called to dangle on that end of the rope, and others of us are called to hold this end securely. Those who stand on this end of the rope have to be every bit as committed as those who dangle on the other end.

So, let me use those two points to ask this:

3. What should we, the people of The Summit Church, be doing?

- A. **Devoting ourselves to prayer:** If you are not called to go yourself, you are called to hold this end of the rope, to stay and support those who do. Most of all, that means praying. **Andrew Murray said,** in something I quote a lot: "The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history."
- We are in the last week of our 20 Days of Prayer and fasting. I want you to finish these days strong if you started; and if not, join us for this last week! Go to our app or our website, sign up for the daily prayer prompts. We won't spam you, it's just prayer prompts. We're also still having nightly Zoom prayer calls at 8p...only 20 mins! And then, make plans to be at our all-church prayer night next Friday, Feb. 11, here at CPC...I want every single seat filled and I want the prayers of our people echoing across RDU and to the ends of the earth next Friday night!

- Here's something else: Get a **copy of our prayer book** (hold up) and use it as part of your daily quiet time. These are at every campus this weekend. After this service, everyone should go to Next Steps to get their copy.
- **I will also mention an app I use by the Joshua Project called "The Unreached of the Day app."** Every day it gives me a people group to pray for. I use this because my heart is wired to forget the nations. I need to keep them before me.

We should be...

B. Making ourselves available

- Maybe you need to take a step in getting involved. Or even to explore a call. I want to invite you to Missions 101 event on March 29. You'll find out about mission trips and a bunch of other things you can be involved in. You can learn there HOW TO JOIN OUR SENT TEAM, a group of lay members who travel around the world ministering to our missionaries when they are out there and when they come home..
- **If you are a college student you can apply to City Project this summer!** It is an 8 week discipleship and missions experience designed to help you engage and figure out how you are called! The deadline was last week but I promise you they will take your application if you get it in! City Project is one of the best things we do here--great for you regardless of what you think is in your future. It's a way for you to explore what I talked about today--finding your particular life-calling. And plus, it's just a ton of fun. Spending the summer with 200 of your closest friends learning the Bible and doing ministry together? COME ON!
- If you have questions about any of these, **TEXT SEND ME to 33933**

Most of all, we should be:

C. Listening

(VAMP)

- I'll say it again: Surely, in a church this size, God will move on some of you to go. Christianity has never been about one kind of people; one culture. Paul was sent out by a multi-ethnic church to reach people of ethnicities different from his.

Over Christmas, I had our staff read the **biography of Adoniram Judson, *To the Golden Shore* by Courtney Anderson**. It's far and away my favorite book ever written except for the Bible. Some of the reasons I love that book are personal to me, but I'd recommend it to all of you. I also had our team listen to a message that John Piper did about Judson. We'll make that available to you on the website and send an email to you about this this week—it's free, you'll love it.

Adoniram Judson is regarded by many to be the first board-appointed missionary from America (GL preceded him, but he was the first board-appointed on). In the 1700's he left New England to take the gospel to Asia. Judson was driven by Paul's words in Romans 15: "I don't want to build on another's foundation, but preach Christ where he hasn't been named."

There was plenty of need in New England; plenty in the American hemisphere. But he was captivated by a vision of those that had never heard. Places that didn't want missionaries. Places where they were hostile to the message; where they threatened to imprison him and his family or worse if they didn't. When Judson first got to Asia, he landed in India, where he spent time with William Carey, who was regarded as the father of modern missions. Even William Carey told Judson not to go to Burma. All previous attempts had ended with the martyrdom of the missionaries.

Listen to this (and I'm mostly quoting Dr. Piper here)--

- When Adoniram Judson entered Burma in July, 1813 it was a hostile and utterly unreached place. It would have been considered a closed country today — with despotism, fierce war with its neighbors, social unrest, and no religious toleration. All the previous missionaries had either died or fled.³
- But Judson went there with his 23-year-old wife of 17 months, where he worked there for 38 years until his death at age 61, making only one trip home to New England during that entire time.
- The price he paid was immense. His beloved wife died there of disease. So did one of his kids. He was imprisoned and tortured.
- Adoniram was the seed that Jesus talked about in John 12 that fell into the ground and died. His suffering was immense. But the fruit God gave from that seed is also immense.⁴ The Burma Baptist Convention (or Myanmar BC, which is what Burma is called today) contains 3,700 congregations and over 2 million believers — the fruit of this dead-but-now-living seed.⁵ The astonishing fruit in Myanmar today grew in the soil of the suffering and death of Adoniram Judson.

Piper says: My question is, if Christ delays his return another two hundred years, which of YOU will have suffered and died so that the triumphs of grace will be told about in 1 or 2 of those remaining 7,300 people groups who are today in the same condition that the Judson's Burma was in 1813? Who will today labor perseveringly so that in 200 years there will be 2 million Christians among peoples who today are held captive by Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism or Communism? Who will give their lives so that some who are today lost, with no chance to hear the gospel, will be counted in that vast throng around the throne we see in Rev 5 proclaiming, "Worthy are you... for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation!"⁶

Summit, where are those in our midst who are moved to take Christ to the hard places, the impossible places, to those places where Christ is not even known? Because, if that's not happening, we should close up shop,

³ Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 134.)

⁴ The World Christian Encyclopedia reports: "The largest Christian force in Burma is the Burma Baptist Convention, which owes its origin to the pioneering activity of the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson." (David Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 202.)

⁵ (Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 462.)

⁶ Adapted from John Piper, "How Few There Be That Die So Hard! The Life of Adoniram Judson," given at Desiring God Pastor's Conference.

because our chapter is over. God will take his hand from us and we'll have to watch as he moves it over to the faithful believers in Korea, or South America, who—praise God—are taking the Great Commission seriously.

But I don't want his hand to leave us. so , **we're going to pray**, BOW YOUR HEADS: I want you to honestly ask, "Is it me?" Acts 13:2 tells us it was in a prayer time God revealed... I'm not saying it's going to happen the exact same way today, or that one of you is going to walk over to someone and say, "It's you." But I do believe God is calling some of you. Will you put your 'yes' on the table right now, and say, "God, if you tell me to go, I'll go? Is it me whom you are calling to go?"

- BTW, just because you are not a college student anymore doesn't mean you stop asking this. **Paul was 60 when he wrote this**--at 60 he was ready for a new assignment, taking Christ to where he'd never been named. **You heard Sam James last week**: 90 years old and wishes he could go back to being young.
- So ask God right now, "Lord, is it me? Are you calling me?"

Song: Is He Worthy?