

THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN MISSIONS: HOW GOD CALLED ME TO ETHIOPIA

MICHAEL GRANGER

I had to crouch as I walked into the dim mud home that was not much larger than a king-sized bed. The walls were made of plywood as thin as cardboard, and covering them were posters of western singers like Usher and Justin Timberlake. On a bed, a mother lifted her voice in pain. Several years earlier, her husband had died of AIDS. Now she lay dying of the same disease.

This was in Addis Ababa, three days after Christmas in 2004. I was 19 years old, and this was my introduction to Ethiopia.

I asked if I could sit down at her side. She gave me a nod and stretched out her hand to hold mine. She looked at me through tears and cried out, "What will happen to my children when I die?" We listened and lamented. We spoke of the hope of the gospel. And then, with wonder, we watched as this dying mother repented of her sin and expressed her faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on behalf of sinners.

As I walked back to the street over cobblestone walkways through alleys of shacks, my ponderings became boisterous, ranting: "What will happen to my children when I die?" AIDS claimed another single mother that night. And for the first time in my life, I felt confronted with a dilemma I could

not ignore—a call to Ethiopia.

Compelled by the Preciousness of Christ

The precious blood of Christ has purchased a people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. And if Christ has gone to such great lengths to secure such a salvation, would he not see to it that his sheep are shepherded along the way?

In partnership with a couple of other brothers, the following years brought about establishing a non-profit organization based in Addis Ababa that supported over 80 children on the verge of streetism, a drop-in center for children who live on the streets, and a children's home. But in due time, I was confronted with another dilemma.

We were doing the meaningful work of keeping children off the streets, keeping a roof over their heads and meals in their bellies, and putting them through school. But what about their souls?

I recognized in Ethiopia that the gospel was missing in many churches. The good news of a wrath-absorbing Savior was replaced with the demonic lies of the prosperity gospel. As that false doctrine was propagated, it was accompanied by an over-emphasis on and perversion of the charismatic gifts.

For me, the primary dilemma went from being, “What will happen to my children when I die?” to “Who will pastor the children of God for whom Christ died?” This, too, became a dilemma for me, one that I could not ignore. I was not only called to Ethiopia. As Ephesians 4:11 says, “And He gave ... shepherds.” I was called to shepherd in Ethiopia.

“Let Your Gospel Fill The Earth”

Statistics suggest that by 2100, just shy of 85% of the world's population will live in Africa and Asia. That likely means that by the time my one-year-old daughter is on her deathbed, the world will have undergone a major transformational shift, and only 15% of the world will be in Europe, the Americas, and Australia. That's only 79 years from now. Yet, despite this coming shift, the lion's share of resources—pastors, professors, books, training, seminaries, funds, successful businesses that fund ministries, etc.—are still largely in the West.

God has richly blessed several denominations and networks, and Sovereign

Grace Churches is among them. One of God’s purposes in being gracious to us and blessing us so richly is that the name of Christ would be honored among the nations. Psalm 67:1-2 says, “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.”

Just as we have come to know God’s saving grace, we desire for this message of grace to be made known across the earth, including those places where the gospel is presently not known. It is because we treasure Christ that we are committed to the advance of his glory among the nations. The one who died for us commands us to go and make disciples of the nations, and he promises he will be with us.

For Sovereign Grace Churches, the Lord has put a song in our hearts:

“ Jesus, come and build Your church
Let Your gospel fill the earth
Till the day that You return
We look to You, we look to You”¹

A Church is Planted

Alongside my Ethiopian ministry partner Abenezer Dejene and our church planting team, Sovereign Grace Churches planted a new church in East Africa. On October 4th, 2020, Trinity Fellowship in Addis Ababa was born.

That Sunday morning, we began with a call to worship from Isaiah 40:9-11, inviting the redeemed to “Behold your God.” That was followed by singing “He is Our God”:

“Now to the King on the throne
Who was and is to come
And to the Lamb Who was slain be glory”²

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I preached from Hebrews 11:39-12:2 on looking to Jesus in the first sermon of a 3-part series entitled “Why We’re Gospel-Centered.” We ended our service by taking communion together. It was an indescribably sweet time with our glorious Savior and with one another. The last words of the service were, “As my dear pastor and friend C.J. Mahaney always says, “I wish tomorrow were Sunday!”

Not a Sacrifice

The glory of Christ makes a man delight in doing hard things in hard places for Jesus. The glory of Christ causes a man to look at discomforts, challenges, trials, and sufferings and to say, “He is worthy!” For me, ever since my conversion, serving the Great Shepherd has been a sort of heaven in and of itself. It is not a sacrifice.

*Brothers and sisters,
let’s continue to
cultivate God’s heart
for the nations.*

I praise God that I am just one of many arrows being shot by the bow of Sovereign Grace to the nations. The Grangers could not be here in East Africa doing what we’re doing if we didn’t have the training, encouragement, prayers, and support that flow from gospel partnership.

It’s an exciting time to be a part of a small family of churches with a passion for partnership and a longing to see Christ exalted among the nations. The one who gave his life to ransom a people from every nation has promised that he will build his church.

Brothers and sisters, let’s continue to cultivate God’s heart for the nations. Let’s seize the opportunities and open doors before us. Let’s thank God for every testimony of his grace in distant lands. And let’s pray that God uses our feeble efforts to lead men and women from many nations to treasure Christ, to the praise of his glory.

He is worthy!

MICHAEL GRANGER

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