

Part 3: We affirm a commitment to the whole mission of the church.

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From our inception, Covenanters were known as “Mission Friends” who were propelled by the vision to be on mission with God through the gospel to all who needed Him. Both, the proclamation of the gospel as well as ministries of justice, compassion, and mercy, would mark this mission. We often begin the discussion of missions with the Great Commission Matt 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8 to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, but we must not forget that missions began long before this when a Holy God sought after a sinful and rebellious man when walking through the garden calling out, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). We didn't invent missions...God did! Our God is a missionary God long before we came into the picture.

The gospel story is the redemptive story of a missionary God reconciling a sinful humanity back to Himself. Any discussion of missions must always be seen in this greater larger story, and never just as an isolated ministry or program of the church. It is the meta-narrative from which all other mini-stories flow out from and back into. Missions is the heartbeat of the gospel story that we find throughout the entire Bible, which ultimately leads to the worship of a God of grace and power who rescues lost people to Himself. God gives us true hope even in the midst of the tragic Fall. God Himself will provide a Rescuer who will bring justice and mercy to our world. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). This first pronouncement of the gospel reminds us of the spiritual battle that we are engaged in between God's Kingdom and the kingdom of this world, and the eventual victory we will have centered in the person of Christ. Missions, evangelism, and church planting must flow out of this reality by keeping the final outcome and future victory before our eyes.

The power, which fuels this mission, is the reality that we also were dramatically rescued in power and grace. When we forget this fundamental truth, we ourselves lose the compassion, humility, and dependency on the Lord to fulfill His mission. We forget that our calling is the ultimate privilege since no one deserves to be rescued and redeemed in the first place. It is always by sheer undeserved grace. Only in this understanding will we be able to look at the outsider, the lost, and the broken and not only identify with them, but minister in a spirit of true love since we ourselves are really no different than them. Missions flow out of heart that understands the gospel of grace.

Missions is not just a department of the church. It isn't just for the super spiritual giants or the religious professionals. Missions isn't a mode we enter into during a summer short term missions trip but rather it defines our essence, our identity, our lifestyle, and our focus. The church is the missionary community of God because our God is a missionary God who indeed

seeks to save that which was lost as seen in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Himself. His mission is now carried out in His Body, the church, as we engage in the whole mission of the church to a lost and broken world.

Bible Study

We often immediately turn to Acts 1:8 or MT 28:18-20 in our study of missions but we must actually begin in Genesis to truly understand our conviction of our commitment to the whole mission of the church. Please read through Gen 3:1-9 and Luke 19:1-10 as we gain a clear picture of God's missionary heart seen at the Fall as well as that same heart in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Questions:

1. How does God demonstrate His heart for missions in Genesis 3:1-9? Why is this significant?
2. How does Jesus demonstrate this same heart in Luke 19:1-10?
3. Why is it important that we never lose sight of our own dramatic rescue when we first became a Christian?
4. "Missions flow out of a heart that understands grace." How has God been teaching you this truth in your life today?