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Book Review: Let the Nations Be Glad by John Piper

Ray Ellis

Free Methodist Church

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Book Reviews

Let the Nations Be Glad

Reviewed by Ray Ellis

Piper, John. Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions. Baker, 2003, 256 pages. \$14.99

John Piper gets our attention with the first sentence of his book: "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church, worship is." The rest of the book is divided into three parts to explain his statement that worship is the ultimate goal of the church.

Part I: "The Supremacy of God in Missions & Worship"

Part II: "Making God Supreme in Missions: The Necessity and Nature of the Task"

Part III: "Making God supreme in Missions: The Practical Out-Working of Compassion and Worship"

In part I of the book the author explains the importance of prayer. He reminds us that in prayer we enter into hand to hand combat with the enemy, Satan the god of this world.

In his discussion of John 10:16 John Piper articulates his theological bias. He says that this great missionary text refers to the doctrine of election. "God chooses who will belong to his sheep, and they are already his before Jesus calls them." (Page 55) He agrees with John Alexander, former president of Inter Varsity, who stated at a Missions Convention, "I could never be a missionary unless I believed in the doctrine of predestination." (Page 55)

Piper fails to explain how the Wesleyan view of "Prevenient Grace and Free Will", also are motivation for Missionary outreach in response to God's promise, "Whosoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13)

The author enjoys making conflicting statements and then softening the statements by further explanation of what he

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means.

“Worship, not missions is the ultimate goal of the church.”

“Preaching of the Word of God, not prayer is the primary work of missions.”

Concerning his statement that missions is not the ultimate goal of the church Piper in Part III of the book explains what he means. When he refers to worship as the ultimate goal of the church he is not referring to worship services. He defines worship as “a cherishing of Christ, a being satisfied with all that God is for us in Christ. When these things are missing, there is no worship, no matter what forms or expressions are present.” (Pages 226-227) Piper goes on to say, “Our goal is to see that experience (worship) happen among all the peoples of the world. May the power of the gospel waken the dead, bring them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they see him and savor him with all their hearts.” (Page 230)

Piper defines what he means when he says “Preaching of the word of God not prayer is the primary work of missions.” “The awesome place of prayer is in the purpose of God to fill the earth with his glory. Not only has God made the accomplishment of his purposes hang on the preaching of the Word, but he has also made the success of that preaching hang on prayer. That purpose won’t happen without prayer.” (Page 66)

In chapter three, “The Supremacy of God in Missions through Suffering,” John Piper gives an excellent view on the difference between Christian martyrs and martyrs for other causes. First, the life of a Christian martyr is taken by those whom he wants to save. Second, Christian martyrs do not pursue death, they pursue life. (Pages 74-75) The Christian view of martyrs puts into perspective the difference between Christians giving their lives for Christ and a member of the Taliban or Al Qaeda taking his/her own life in a suicide bombing attack in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Piper goes to great lengths in part II of his book, “Making God Supreme in Missions,” to present a Biblical view of judgment and eternal punishment. He quotes well known evangelicals John Stott, Clark Pinnock, and Edward Fudge who say that for those not saved at death there is no eternal punishment because the fires of judgment annihilates all who reject Christ. (Page 112)

Piper answers in depth the truth that there is eternal judgment with three quotations:

1. Will anyone experience eternal conscious torment under God’s wrath?
2. Is the work of Christ the necessary means provided

by God for eternal salvation?

3. Is it necessary for people to hear of Christ in order to be eternally saved?

Piper gives Biblical truth in exegesis of scripture that at the final judgment there is the resurrection of the righteous to everlasting life and the resurrection of the unrighteousness to everlasting punishment.

According to Piper love demands the task of missions. "If people all over the world are under condemnation for sin and cut off from eternal life; and if calling on Jesus is their only hope for eternal, joyful fellowship with God, then love demands missions." (Page 155)

"Let the Nations Be Glad!" is a helpful book for pastors wanting to keep his/her church focused on missionary outreach both at home and abroad. It is clear our mission is not either/or it is both/and. The more we get our local church involved in world missions the healthier the church will be. Our task is not finished until all the nations have heard the good news of Jesus Christ.

Reviewer

Ellis, Ray W. Title: Senior Pastor, Church Planter, and Conference Superintendent. Dr. Ellis earned a B.A. from Greenville College and both the M.Div. and D.Min. from Asbury Theological Seminary. He was certified as a Church Growth Consultant by Fuller Institute in 1985. Ray served for nine years as Director of Evangelism and Church Growth for the Free Methodist Church. He is the 2002 recipient of the Donald A. McGavran award.