

# A missionary vision from church history

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father God, we ask now for your help as we consider the subject of the gospel being taken into all the world.

! We pray particularly as we learn from John Calvin, your servant of old, and from others. We pray that it would be helpful for us.

Help us as we sing through these things this evening. Help us as we listen and as we get opportunity to chat together. Would this evening be edifying and helpful, we pray.

Please take the things that I've prepared and do your work through it. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. We'll know that at the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus gives that great commission to his disciples.

[ 1 : 02 ] To go and make disciples of every nation, baptizing them and teaching them. That's an instruction given to his disciples primarily.

But now we carry on that work. Jesus said, surely I'm with you to the end of the age. Disciples of every nation. We're a long way ahead.

But until Christ comes, the great commission is part of what we're looking to do in the world.

We'll think about that next Sunday a bit more about what Jesus says there. But how's the great commission and how has evangelism been worked out in church history?

We haven't got time to look at everything in church history, which is why we're pausing particularly on John Calvin. But also Martin Luther will get a bit of a look in as well.

[ 2 : 07 ] Thinking about the time of the Reformation. And often when we speak about Luther and Calvin and the Reformation, we think of the five solace. Which are a summary of the things that John, Martin and many others were teaching.

And they're nothing new. They didn't invent them. But it's a rediscovery of them really. A rediscovery of the old gospel.

There were people before them teaching these things. So John Wycliffe, he's sometimes known as the morning star of the Reformation even.

He taught these truths. Jan Hus was burnt at the stake about 100 years before Martin Luther nailed his theses to that door in Wittenberg.

He was teaching these truths. Luther himself, he said, we teach no new thing. We repeat and establish all things which the apostles and all godly teachers have taught before us.

[ 3 : 31 ] And so we can say the apostles taught these things. Certainly in Acts we've found Peter preaching Christ alone to people.

We saw this verse last week. Salvation is found in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

And if we remember from another bit of Acts we've looked at, that early Christian church, they were devoted to listening to the apostles teaching.

The apostles who taught things like this. That's what they were teaching. But what was their view on reaching the world?

What was their view on missions? It's been argued that Calvin and Luther showed little interest in cross-cultural mission and evangelism.

[ 4 : 29 ] As some would say of Calvinists, that they are people who don't care to do mission work because we believe God has predestined people to salvation.

Which we do believe. But I think Calvin might respond saying this. We can't know who God has in mind to save.

In fact, maybe it just might surprise us who God will save. So we faithfully preach the gospel to all. We faithfully tell anybody about the Lord Jesus.

And we trust that he will do his work of salvation which is mysterious to us. As we read Calvin carefully, or as people who are cleverer than I read Calvin carefully, we actually see his heart for mission.

And we see in Calvin and Luther and others that they had a profound effect on the gospel going out to Europe and beyond.

[ 5 : 59 ] Though Calvin never wrote a whole chapter specifically on missions in his works, we see it throughout the institutes, John Calvin's institutes of the Christian religion, and his commentaries as well.

Even he speaks of mission to the world, the gospel going out to the world in passages and Deuteronomy. So it's spread all over his writings.

And here's four convictions that it seems Calvin had. Firstly, a vision for the victorious advance of Christ and his kingdom.

Calvin said this, God the Father has appointed Christ to rule from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth.

And he said that commenting on that psalm that we read. Psalm 72 verse 8, just one verse from that psalm. May he rule from sea to sea and from the river and to the ends of the earth.

[ 7 : 14 ] Calvin sees that pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. We've seen Christ himself say it, haven't we? In Acts chapter 1 verse 8, which is a key verse I've been mentioning in Acts.

Let me just turn to it so I get it right. Acts chapter 1 verse 8, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and to the ends of the earth.

Jesus commissioning his disciples. You will be witnesses to the whole earth.

My name, salvation in Christ alone is to go out to the whole earth through you. Calvin says some of these things elsewhere.

So in writing on the Lord's Prayer, I particularly have loved reading Calvin on the Lord's Prayer and on the Ten Commandments.

[ 8 : 22 ] That's my favorite bit of his works. In writing on the phrase, Your kingdom come, he says this, That's what we're asking when we pray that line, Your kingdom come.

Do we share this vision for Christ's victorious advance through the world? His rule to be extended across the world.

It could be very easy for us to get stuck in our own little Christian bubble, couldn't it, in Brighton. But Christ needs to go to the ends of the earth.

The ends of Brighton and Hove and the ends of the earth. And I think he's used this church in the past, hasn't he? And even now, In bringing in internationals, Who then go back to their countries or to other places.

And we pray that whilst they're here, They're built up and equipped in their faith to go and serve the Lord abroad in different ways. So even at our little church at Calvary, I think God is doing that.

[ 9 : 58 ] Second conviction Calvin had, A passionate desire for God's glory. Famously, he viewed the world as a theater for God's glory.

Look at creation and we see God's glory around it. And he said this, The whole world should be at the theater of his glory by the spread of the gospel.

As people come to faith, They are giving glory to God. They're doing what we've been designed to do.

Is it the Westminster Shorter Catechism that says, The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Our chief end is not evangelism. It's glorifying God. We will glorify God in our evangelism, But that's not our chief end.

[ 11 : 05 ] Our goal is to glorify God. And see people come to faith, Who will also come to glorify God. Gee, what is our purpose?

For Calvin, All of life was to be lived for God's glory. And this has apparently shaped other missionary work. So a quote, Which I haven't gone on the screen, But I'll read it to you.

The fact is that the glory of God was the prime motive in early Protestant missions. And it's played such a vital role in later missionary thought and activity.

And it can be traced directly back to Calvin's theology. In particular, It shaped William Carey, Who's known as the father of missions.

He himself, A convinced Calvinist. So it's had an impact. Next conviction that Calvin had is the doctrine of the open door.

[12:14] Maybe let's take a break from my voice. And there's three scriptures on the screen. I'd love three volunteers to pass around the microphone and read some of these verses.

Who wants to go first? So Phil, If you find Acts 14, 26 to 28, Let's go one by one.

So Acts 14, 26 to 28. Yep. From Italia, They sailed back to Antioch, Where they had been committed to the grace of God, For the work they had now completed.

On arriving there, They gathered the church together, And reported all that God had done through them, And how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. So in that little passage, There is mention in verse 27, Of this open door.

[13:32] Can someone volunteer to read the next? Angela, Brilliant. 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2, Verse 12 to 17.

Okay. Yeah. Now when I went to Troas, To preach the gospel of Christ, And found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, Because I did not find my brother Titus there.

So I said goodbye to them, And went on to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, Who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ, And through us spreads everywhere, The fragrance of the knowledge of him.

For we are to God, The aroma of Christ, Among those who are being saved, And those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death, To the other the fragrance of life, And who is equal to such task?

And like so many, We do not peddle the word of God for profit, On the contrary, In Christ we speak before God, With sincerity, Like men sent from God.

[14:49] Thanks, Angela. So again, Paul mentions the open door, The Lord had opened a door for him, In order that they may share something, Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians chapter 4, 2 to 6 is the final, One, Let's go, Let's go Bill.

If you pass the, Microphone over to, To Bill, That would be great. Devote yourselves to prayer, Being watchful and thankful, And pray for us too, That God may open a door, For our message, So that we may proclaim, The mystery of Christ, For which I am in chains, Pray that I may proclaim it, Clearly, As I should, Be wise in the way you act, Towards outsiders, Make the most of every opportunity, Let your conversation be always full of grace, Seasoned with salt, So that you may be, So that you may know how to answer everyone.

Thank you. I don't think I'd ever noticed, This, That there were three passages, In the New Testament, Speak of an open door, I knew the Colossians one, But there's three, And I guess the illustration, Is very easy for us to understand, Someone opens a door, Invites us in, We can freely walk in, And have conversation with them, It also reminded me of, An experience, Going out with one of the Americans, Last year, And we were knocking on doors, And someone answered the door, And very quickly, Realised we were Christians, And shut the door in our face, So, Very clearly not an open door, And here's what Calvin said on this, He said, When the door is open, So the servants of the Lord, Should make advances, Where there is opportunity, Let us not withhold compliance,

With so kind an invitation from God, It's just a great image, To have in our heads, And a great thing to pray for, I think, As Paul does, He asks us to pray for him, That doors would open, So that they can share, Of the Lord Jesus Christ, But this doesn't mean, We sit back lazily, And wait for the door to open, Here's a comment, In fact, We should probably read the verse, So we know, Why on earth, This might be in Calvin's mind, Isaiah 12, Verse 5, We're, We're dotting around the Bible tonight, Isaiah 12, Verse 5, And, Maybe someone, Could read that one out, I think, I think David will, So if we,

[18:11] Pass the microphone, And Eva, Sing to the Lord, For he has done glorious things, Let this be known, To all the world, Shout aloud, And sing for joy, People of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel, Among you, Thank you, So Calvin, On verse 5, And verse 5 there says, Isaiah shows, That it is our duty, To proclaim the goodness of God, To every nation, Isaiah certainly says, Let this be known, To all the world, While we exhort, And encourage others, We must not, At the

same time, Sit down in laziness, Laziness, But it is proper, That we set an example, Before others, For nothing, Can be more absurd, Than to see lazy,

And slothful men, And women, Who are exciting, Other men, To praise God, So an encouragement there, Not to be sitting idly back, It's an accusation, Of Calvinists, That we do just sit back, And let God do the work, But Calvin, Calvin says otherwise, Helpful for us to see, So we pray for open doors, We push doors open, And see where God might lead them, Finally, Final conviction of Calvin, His concern for the lost, His concern for the lost, Calvin said this, God certainly desires, Nothing more, Than for those who are perishing, And rushing towards death, To return to the way of safety, That is why the gospel, Is today proclaimed, Throughout the world, And he says of Christians,

The godly will not be saved, Satisfied with his own calling, And personal salvation, But he will desire, To draw others in with him, In other words, We ourselves, We're saved, Praise God, But we don't want to rest there, If that's true for us, And we've experienced the joy, And blessing of salvation, How much more will want others, To come into that tea, Not just satisfied, With our own salvation, And so I guess, A question we should ask ourselves, Is do we have a burden, For the lost, Do we long, Do we pray, For our family and friends, Long and pray, For our city, And the world, For more and more people, To come into the kingdom of God, Calvin certainly did, And he wrote this prayer, For church in Geneva, To pray in their liturgy, And I thought we could pray it, Now together, And then we'll sing a song, So we need to add our men, At the end of this prayer, I didn't put that on the screen, But hopefully that's a given, So why don't we pray this together, We pray to you now, O most gracious and merciful Father, Oh sorry, Should we start again?

We pray to you now, O most gracious God, Our merciful Father, For all people everywhere, As it is your will, To be acknowledged, As the saviour of the world, Through the redemption, Wrought by your son, Jesus Christ, Grant that those, Who are still estranged, From the knowledge of him, Being in the darkness, And captivity of error, And ignorance, May be brought, By the illumination, Of your Holy Spirit, And the preaching, Of your gospel, To the right way of salvation, Which is to know you, The only true God, And Jesus Christ, Whom you have sent, Amen, Amen, Let's sing of some of this stuff now, As we sing, From the sun's rising, Which picks up, On that theme of, [ 22 : 44 ] All the earth, Singing, The songs of, God's praise, From, Calvin, And Luther, And others, Five lessons, From them, And, Mission, Stuff, So, Lessons from Calvin, And Luther, Number one, Being clear, On the gospel, We, Learned, That those, Those five solas, They're nothing new, A rediscovery, Of, The gospel, Which, The church, In general, Had lost, Calvin, Luther, And other, Reformers, Helped, Churches, To be clear again, On what the gospel is, On what salvation is, Justification, By faith alone, But, I can't, I can't say it, Off the top of my head,

By grace alone, Through faith alone, In Christ alone, But through the scriptures alone, For God's glory alone, And, Be clear on the gospel, Be clear on those five things, That's a nice short one, To begin with, Secondly, Motivation coming, From the wonder, Of the gospel, And, Calvin said, He was inflamed, With a desire, For the advance, Of the gospel, Why was he inflamed, With a desire, For the advance, Of the gospel, He saw that in scriptures, It was vital, That Christ is made known, To the ends of the earth, And he saw a wonder, In the gospel, It's power to save sinners, It gives us a lasting hope, We're safe for eternity, We're safe to bring glory,

To God, Are we ourselves, Marvelling at the gospel, It's the Lord's supper, That we took this morning, That can help us, To wander afresh, At the gospel, It's to be marvelled at, Thirdly, The power of the scriptures, And Calvin was so convinced, Of the gospel, And of the power of scripture, That he would have sermons, Every day of the week, Plus twice on a Sunday, That sounds like a lot, But he was convinced, Of the power of God's words, Those were different times, People didn't have Bibles, Readily available to them, Like we do, And so how would they hear, From the Bible, Without coming, To gather together,

To hear it preached, But Luther, Luther, Was influential, In spurring on, The translation, Of the scriptures, Into many European languages, He knew the importance, Of getting the scriptures, Into people's hands, Into the languages, They could read, He knew that in them, We find the gospel, He himself, Read scripture, And was convicted, Of his sin, And he saw the gospel, He saw the Lord Jesus, He saw salvation, In the words, It's in the word, That we find the power, Are we convinced, By the power of this word, Or instead, Are we trusting, Other things, Like what our building, Looks like, Or how the music sounds, Are we convinced, By the power, Of this word,

And fourthly, And this gets, Rather interesting, I think, The importance, Of reaching migrants, So in the 1550s, The population, Of Geneva, Doubled, As refugees, From France, Poured in, And many of them, Sat under, Calvin's, Preaching, All those times, During the week, And something, Happened to a number, Of these French refugees, As they listened, To Calvin's preaching, Their hearts, Were stirred, For their homelands, Many of them, Yearned to go back, To France, And reach, France, With the gospel, And Calvin agreed, To commission, Some of them, To return, But he wanted, To train them, First, He said, A good missionary, Is a good theologian, [ 27 : 53 ] So he taught them, He taught them, Theology, He trained them, To preach, And assess, Their moral character, Making sure, They were qualified, To be ministers, Of the gospel, That he could send off, To France, Calvin, And the church, In Geneva, Sent many missionaries, Not just to France, But also to Italy, To the Netherlands, To Hungary, To Poland, To the, I don't know, What this is, But the free imperial, City states, In the Rhineland, Someone can tell me later, And we even know, Of two missionaries, That he sent, From Geneva, In 1557, To Brazil, Extraordinary, Calvin had a vision, For reaching the ends, Of the earth, And this was being, Worked out, Through the migrants, That were pouring in, I know that immigration, Was a hot topic, During the election, We'll have different,

Views in it, And that's absolutely okay, But I think we can say, There are real opportunities, When the Lord, Sends the nations to us, I read of a gathering, Of church leaders, In London, Which were considering, That very opportunity, So many, Come in from other countries, In London, And perhaps that's, One of the best opportunities, We, The UK church have, To reach the nations, God's bringing them to us, It's also a time, For Christians to be built, As well, When they come over, Built up, I spoke to, I remember speaking to, A Chinese, Student, Studying, Here in Sussex, Here in Brighton, And he was amazed, That he could be part, Of a church, That met, Not in secret, And it was uplifting, For him to see that, Maybe he'll be more equipped, For serving the Lord back home, That actually takes us, Into the next point, Targeting universities, So in terms of engagement, With the world, One of the lessons, We can learn, From Calvin and Luther, Is that they're, Targeting the universities, So Luther himself, Was converted, As a young lecturer, In Wittenberg, And Calvin, Was converted, Whilst a student, In the University, Of Orleans, Which was southwest, Of Paris, And it was, Through universities, That the reformation, Spread a bit, From Germany, To the Netherlands, And on to Oxford, And Cambridge, And both Luther, And Calvin, They both, Contributed to universities, And to the academic world, In different ways, Which helped, Helped raise, Education levels, Actually in Europe, Luther, Encouraged children's, School attendance, And campaigned, For more schools, In Germany, So not just universities, Universities certainly are, And this is my reflection, That they certainly are, Places of learning, Places of debate, Places where lots of, Strange things go on as well, But places where young people, Are leaving home, And exploring the world, Exploring where do they fit in, So I think there are, Unique possibilities, In reaching universities, With the gospel, That's not the only, Thing at all, But we can chat about this, In a, In a few moments, Um, Those are, Five lessons, Which, Particularly come out of, Reading, Uh,

The book, That I've been reading, We'll chat through, Some of this, In a moment, Um, But first, Let's, Let's, Let's, Let's, Let's, Pause and sing again, Um, We're facing a task unfinished, Calvin knew that, We're still facing it, Um, A task to take, Take the gospel, To the world, So, So let's sing this song, Let's sing this song prayerfully, And then a part of our response to the song, Can be chatting and praying, About some of this stuff, Um, So we'll, We'll stand and sing, Uh, When Phil's, Ready, Thank you, Out of the gospel, That's the first one, Um, The microphone is, Nathan's got it, So, Hold it up, And maybe someone will take it from you, Unless you yourself want to share, It will be on, All right, Um, For that one, We, Talked about testimony, Um, So,

[ 33 : 00 ] It's, Yeah, It's good to share, Uh, Your testimony, Or other people's, Testimony, People that you might have, Read the gospel with, And how it's impacted them, So just encouraging each other, Through that, We said exactly the same thing, Um, It really is, Encouraging, Isn't it, To hear, How do you become a Christian, It's a great question to ask people, Um, I've, Heard, Quite a lot of, People's stories in the church, And there's probably more, Uh, I need to hear, But it is encouraging, Maybe we need to, Get people up a bit more, And sharing testimonies, Um, Remind one another, Of what the Lord has done, Um, Thank you, Any, Any other thoughts, On that first one?

Praying with people, Praying with people, Looking to the Lord, As we, So, Heard this morning, Um, Taking confidence in him, Um, Anything, To add from the second question, How can we have a

greater concern, For the building of God's kingdom?

Maybe, Maybe, Maybe you spent more time, On the third question, Shall we go with that? How, How could we use, Opportunities, With, Other nationalities, In the university? Um, Come on, Someone's got to speak, People were chatting, Phil will go for it, Right, I had some ideas, My wife didn't necessarily agree with me, In every case, Um, In terms of local students, There are three, Or there will be three, Large purpose built, Um, Blocks of student accommodation, Within about a five minute walk of here, And, In the past, We have organized, Ourselves, To take, To the, Uh, For the new intake of students, A, Survival kit, Of something, Some things that you would value, If you're a student, You've just arrived, You don't know where the shops are, Uh, So, A coffee, Sugar, Um, A tea bag, I can't remember what, A cup of soup, Or something like that, And an invitation, To come to the church, And a little description, Of what being a Christian is, Or something like that, And we took that, To Abacus house, I can't claim, That there was any big response, From it, But, There certainly wouldn't have been, A response if we hadn't gone, Um, And we've got three of those, Uh, Big blocks, Uh, Just in, In easy reach, So, So, That was one idea I had, And the other idea I had, Was that, Um, I know that locally, Uh, Uh, Uh, A kind, Secular lady, Runs a conversation class, Or she used to run a conversation class, Down in the, Uh, In the cafe, In the middle of the level, And people could just turn up, And practice their English, Uh, Free of charge, But it was just there, As a way of, Um, I guess you would buy a drink, And then sit around a table, And have conversation in, In straightforward English,

[ 36 : 26 ] Uh, And I think that would, Something like that would be, Within our power to run, Uh, And open the door to people, Of different nationalities, Uh, And we could even use the text of the Bible, As a, A text to, To, Um, Understand English language, Those are my ideas.

That's interesting. Thank you, Phil. It does take personnel. If it's as simple as, We all speak English, That would be great.

I don't know if it is, But, Um, The, The, The student, A purpose built student accommodation, So there's Abacus, In London Road, Abacus, And then, Uh, The, The one further down, I think it's called Pavilions, Uh, Where, Where it used to be Boots, And then directly opposite that, Where it was Iceland, McLaren are just on the finishing stretch, Of that, Ready for the new academic, Year. So that, That would be several hundreds of students. On our doorstep. On our doorstep, Yeah. Thank you. Um, We have done quite a lot, With overseas students in the past, And, I was thinking, It does need, Someone, Or, People to, Kind of, Focus on, The, The students, And, Um, My thing is that, We focused on overseas people, Which is a good thing, Because then they go back, And spread the gospel, In their places, But that doesn't, Have an impact on the, On our country, Um, And, And we definitely need, Um, Leaders of churches, And, Um, You know, Uh, People, Christians, In this country, To, Um, You know, Commit their lives to God, And, And, Run with it, As it were, Um, Yeah. It's, It's, Both, Isn't it?

[ 38 : 40 ] It's both, And so, So, To go out to the end of the earth, But we also want, Yeah. Churches to be built up, And, Yeah. God's word to grow, In this country, So, We've done quite a lot, In this church, With overseas people, And it's been great, Mm, But we haven't done a lot, With home students, Mm, So, It means that, The church isn't, Is, This particular body of people, Is not built up, Mm, Apart from people who, Um, You know, Pop in, Um, Because, They go away again, Don't they?

So, What are you saying? I'm not, I'm saying that we should have, We should have people working with overseas students, But we should also have, A person, Or, Two people, Working with home students, Specifically, That's their main mission, Mm, And I, I for one, Wouldn't mind, Giving some money towards, Hi, You know, Employing somebody to be a student worker, I wouldn't mind doing that, Wow, Um, I don't know how much I can afford, I can see why, I have, Had slightly different views, Um, But that's, That's really, Really, Um, Helpful to, Just think about, Yeah, And there's been great opportunities, The church has had in the past, For internationals, And we pray, That we'll be going forward, But also, Those at home as well, Um, Yeah, Any, Any other thoughts people had, On, On any of this stuff? Roger, Gay for it, Well done, Yeah, I mean, We can, Look forward to, New opportunities, God will give us, We might not have had, Them before, Yeah, Or, Um, There may be, People from, Um, Other parts of Europe, A lot of people, Migrating here, From all kinds of places, So, I, I think that, That's, You know, A lot of people are, Drawn to Brighton, Um, Whether it's for short term, Or longer term, And, Um, Yeah, Uh, Refugees

as well, As we were saying, With Ali and his family, So, Um, Yeah, But when it comes to, How we, What strategy, I think, Um, That's, That's going to take more time, To, To know, Isn't it? But, Um, I think it's, To be, Looking out for, People who come in, Um, Cooperate with other churches, And maybe things we can do jointly, Yeah, Uh, With, With the other churches we, We know and work with already, And share, Share the resource, Of people and time, With, With them, Yeah.

I think it's been really, Helpful, Chatting through this stuff, Um, We can keep talking, Um, We can keep praying, And we can, Uh, Work, What, Yeah, Where, Where might the Lord lead us, In some of these things, Um, Let, Let's close, In song, Um, Let, Let's give the God the glory, He does great things, He's done great things for us, We spoke about, Um, Testimony, Importance of, Of sharing, What God has done in our lives, And we want to give God the glory for that, He is working, He is working in this world, He is working, Uh, Even in this city, And doing great things, So let's give him the glory, Um, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Let the earth, Amen.