



Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ: The Cost of Bringing the Gospel to the Nations in the Lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John Paton

John Piper

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The fifth volume in Piper's acclaimed *The Swans Are Not Silent* series illustrates powerful and enduring lessons through the missional sufferings of Tyndale, Judson, and Paton.

Jesus' words in John 12 are sobering: unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it will bear little fruit. The history of Christianity's expansion proves that God's strategy for reaching unreached peoples with the gospel includes the sufferings of his frontline heralds—the missionaries who willingly die a thousand daily deaths to advance God's kingdom.

Pastor John Piper's latest addition to *The Swans Are Not Silent* series focuses on this flesh-and-blood reality in the lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John Paton. The price they paid to translate the Word of God, to pave the way for missionary mobilization around the world, and to lead the hostile to Christ was great. Yet their stories show in triplicate how the gospel advances not only through the faithful proclamation of the truth but through representing the afflictions of Christ in our sufferings.

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From Reader Review Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ: The Cost of Bringing the Gospel to the Nations in the Lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John Paton for online ebook

Andre Argolo says

Um livro maravilhoso! Homens que entenderam o real significado do viver para Cristo e o morrer como lucro; homens que vivenciaram tribulações acima de suas forças, mas perseveraram crendo na soberania divina em cada momento; homens que se enquadram perfeitamente na descrição de Hebreus: "o mundo não era digno deles".

Hank Pharis says

William Tyndale was the first to translate the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into English. It is estimated that at least 83% of the N.T. and 76% of the O.T. in the King James version came from Tyndale's translation. But he was severely persecuted, imprisoned and executed for his efforts.

Adoniram Judson was the first protestant missionary sent from North America. During his almost 40 years of ministry in Burma he endured imprisonment, the deaths of his first and second wife and three children.

John Paton was one of the first to take the gospel to the New Hebrides where the natives were cannibals. Within a year of arriving his wife and child died and he almost died 14 times from fevers he endured.

Chapronrin says

This book is solid throughout. It fills up an element of much that is missing in Evangelical Christianity today regarding sacrificing our all for whatever and wherever God leads us to reach those in hostile lands for Christ. When I was young, the spirit of missionary work was high among young people. Sadly today, there is not much heard about it. This fifth in the "Swans Are Not Silent" series is a great help in demonstrating what some heroes of the faith who ultimately lost so much (including a life in William Tyndale) or were in frequent danger, sickness, prison, and poverty. Yet, each of them accomplished great things for the kingdom of God. Tyndale translated the Bible for the English peoples, John Paton and Adoniram Judson were missionaries to what were previously thought to be unreachable people groups. For me, the significance of this book and its value lies in bringing attention to missions a Christians being willing to go with the spirit and attitude of giving up our all for Christ and His kingdom. This message is greatly needed in an Evangelical world that has mostly become satisfied living in the warm comforts of a self-focused and satisfied society. Certainly we have to do better and John Piper surely offers it in this excellent book.

I should add here that though I do believe Piper made three excellent choices on who to cover in this series, I do think he could have made it a little more valuable for a younger audience by including Jim Elliot as one of the three. Yet, which one to replace would have been a difficult choice in itself to make!

CJ says

This book gives short biographies of the lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John G. Paton. The title comes from Colossians 1:24: Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church. (KJV) John Piper makes the point that afflictions are the means of missionary fruitfulness.

Afflictions of Tyndale - falsely accused, imprisoned and martyred. Accomplished printed translations of the new translation translated from the Greek, which fueled reformation.

Afflictions of Judson - heat, disease, lost two wives, seven children, imprisoned twice, and tortured. Accomplished a New and Old Testament Bible translation and Dictionary in Burmese. Hundreds of converts.

Afflictions of Paton - worked among cannibals, in fear of being eaten, four unfruitful years, wife and child died. Accomplished massive conversions to Christ.

Vincent Ng says

The book is definitely very encouraging for a Christian. John Piper briefly yet powerfully outlines the lives of three missionaries and their contributions, and the great lengths that they went through all for the sake of the gospel. The focus and the determination of Judson, Paton, and Tyndale should be a reminder to all believers as to our purpose and mission. From their endurance through sickness, death of loved ones, death threats, betrayal; whether being burned, being eaten, or dying on a boat - their reliance on God and his sovereignty strengthens believers from past to present.

Felipe says

Belo relato de três homens que deram a vida pela causa de Cristo: William Tyndale, Adoniran Judson e John Paton.

Infelizmente, a beleza do livro é comprometida na edição brasileira. Não bastassem as notas de fim de capítulo, em vez de notas de rodapé, há inúmeros erros de tradução e revisão. Diversas frases simplesmente não fazem sentido. Além disso, há alguns erros crassos, como Geneva Bible traduzido como Bíblia de Gênova. É dito que a tradução de Tyndale tornou-se “a base para a Bíblia de Gênova, publicada em 1557”. Erraram por 381Km.

Os muitos erros são ainda mais impressionantes pelo fato deste livro, publicado em 2010, ter sido reimpresso em 2012 com tantos erros.

Keith Feisel says

great biography and a great series. Nothing motivates like a great missionary story! (Not from this book, but noteworthy as a teaser):

Advice to Missionary Candidates

by Adoniram Judson

To the Foreign Missionary Association of the Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution, N. Y.

DEAR BRETHREN: Yours of November last, from the pen of your Corresponding Secretary, Mr. William Dean, is before me. It is one of the few letters that I feel called upon to answer, for you ask my advice on several important points. There is, also, in the sentiments you express, something so congenial to my own, that I feel my heart knit to the members of your association, and instead of commonplace reply, am desirous of setting down a few items which may be profitable to you in your future course. Brief items they must be, for want of time forbids my expatiating.

In commencing my remarks, I take you as you are. You are contemplating a missionary life.

First, then, let it be a missionary life; that is, come out for life, and not for a limited term. Do not fancy that you have a true missionary spirit, while you are intending all along to leave the heathen soon after acquiring their language. Leave them! for what? To spend the rest of your days in enjoying the ease and plenty of your native land?

Secondly. In choosing a companion for life, have particular regard to a good constitution, and not wantonly, or without good cause, bring a burden on yourselves and the mission.

Thirdly. Be not ravenous to do good on board ship. Missionaries have frequently done more hurt than good, by injudicious zeal, during their passage out.

Fourthly. Take care that the attention you receive at home, the unfavorable circumstances in which you will be placed on board ship, and the unmissionary examples you may possibly meet with at some missionary stations, do not transform you from living missionaries to mere skeletons before you reach the place of your destination. It may be profitable to bear in mind, that a large proportion of those who come out on a mission to the East die within five years after leaving their native land. Walk softly, therefore; death is narrowly watching your steps.

Fifthly. Beware of the reaction which will take place soon after reaching your field of labor. There you will perhaps find native Christians, of whose merits or demerits you can not judge correctly without some familiar acquaintance with their language. Some appearances will combine to disappoint and disgust you. You will meet with disappointments and discouragements, of which it is impossible to form a correct idea from written accounts, and which will lead you, at first, almost to regret that you have embarked in the cause. You will see men and women whom you have been accustomed to view through a telescope some thousands of miles long. Such an instrument is apt to magnify. Beware, therefore, of the reaction you will experience from a combination of all these causes, lest you become disheartened at commencing your work, or take up a prejudice against some persons and places, which will embitter all your future lives.

Sixthly. Beware of the greater reaction which will take place after you have acquired the language, and become fatigued and worn out with preaching the gospel to a disobedient and gainsaying people. You will sometimes long for a quiet retreat, where you can find a respite from the tug of toiling at native work -- the incessant, intolerable friction of the missionary grindstone. And Satan will sympathize with you in this matter; and he will present some chapel of ease, in which to officiate in your native tongue, some government situation, some professorship or editorship, some literary or scientific pursuit, some supernumerary translation, or, at least, some system of schools; anything, in a word, that will help you, without much surrender of character, to slip out of real missionary work. Such a temptation will form the

crisis of your disease. If your spiritual constitution can sustain it, you recover; if not, you die.

Seventhly. Beware of pride; not the pride of proud men, but the pride of humble men -- that secret pride which is apt to grow out of the consciousness that we are esteemed by the great and good. This pride sometimes eats out the vitals of religion before its existence is suspected. In order to check its operations, it may be well to remember how we appear in the sight of God, and how we should appear in the sight of our fellow-men, if all were known. Endeavor to let all be known. Confess your faults freely, and as publicly as circumstances will require or admit. When you have done something of which you are ashamed, and by which, perhaps, some person has been injured (and what man is exempt?), be glad not only to make reparation, but improve the opportunity for subduing your pride.

Eighthly. Never lay up money for yourselves or your families. Trust in God from day to day, and verily you shall be fed.

Ninthly. Beware of that indolence which leads to a neglect of bodily exercise. The poor health and premature death of most Europeans in the East must be eminently ascribed to the most wanton neglect of bodily exercise.

Tenthly. Beware of genteel living. Maintain as little intercourse as possible with fashionable European society. The mode of living adopted by many missionaries in the East is quite inconsistent with that familiar intercourse with the natives which is essential to a missionary.

There are many points of self-denial that I should like to touch upon; but a consciousness of my own deficiency constrains me to be silent. I have also left untouched several topics of vital importance, it having been my aim to select such only as appear to me to have been not much noticed or enforced. I hope you will excuse the monitorial style that I have accidentally adopted. I assure you, I mean no harm.

In regard to your inquiries concerning studies, qualifications, etc., nothing occurs that I think would be particularly useful, except the simple remark, that I fear too much stress begins to be laid on what is termed a thorough classical education.

Praying that you may be guided in all your deliberations, and that I may yet have the pleasure of welcoming some of you to these heathen shores, I remain

Your affectionate brother,

A. JUDSON

Maulmain, June 25, 1832

David says

When I first read Piper over 20 years ago (Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist), I thought he was wordy and verbose. (I guess that is a tautology). I have come to change my mind about that somewhat. At any rate, from his web-page, desiringgod.org, I have come to enjoy his biographies that he does during his annual pastors conferences at his church. This is a first-rate book in his Christian biography series, covering the lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John Paton. Listen to the messages. Buy the book. Short but helpful writings on worthy Christian lives.

James B says

Inspiring book... What gives them the courage to face all these affliction? Not for their own glory or wealth,

but for the kingdom. What confidence they must have in Lord Jesus Christ to give away their entire life away.

If there is one common ground these men have other than the obvious zeal for God is their discipline in spiritual life. It truly challenges me who wants to be one of them that I must start act now to prepare myself. For one devote myself to reading/meditating/praying/writing in the morning.

Wayne Walker says

This is Book No. 5 in the series The Swans Are Not Silent. Piper explains the series title in the Preface, where he writes, "By swans I mean the inspiring lives of faithful Christians in history. They are not silent in the sense that their lives still speak powerfully for our encouragement and guidance. He then quotes Eraclius at the retirement of Augustine as Bishop of Hippo in A.D. 430 when he said, "The cricket chirps, the swan is silent." Piper wrote when he read that, he thought, "No, Eraclius the swans are not silent. They go on speaking. That is, they continue speaking if someone tells their story and gives them a voice."

Concerning the book title, Piper explains in his Introduction that it is based on Colossians 1:24 where Paul wrote, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church." His point is that "this voluntary suffering and death to save others is not only the content but it is also the method of our mission." He then illustrates this principle by reviewing the lives and work of William Tyndale, the English Reformation leader who translated the Bible into the English language and was burned at the stake for it in 1536; John G. Paton, Scottish missionary to the island of Tanna in the South Pacific's New Hebrides chain beginning in 1824; and Adoniram Judson, the American missionary to the southeast Asian country of Burma, now Myanmar.

Other books in the series are The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God's Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin; The Hidden Smile of God: The Fruit of Affliction in the Lives of John Bunyan, William Cowper, and David Brainerd; The Roots of Endurance: Invincible Perseverance in the Lives of John Newton, Charles Simeon, and William Wilberforce; and Contending for Our All: Defending Truth and Treasuring Christ in the Lives of Athanasius, John Owen, and J. Gresham Machen. You must remember that Piper is an evangelical Calvinist, so some of the doctrines of evangelical Calvinism, like salvation by faith alone and total hereditary depravity, pop up from time to time. However, the men whom he discusses were all important figures in religious history who have a lot to tell us. Whether we agree with everything which they taught or not, we can admire their conviction to stand up for what they believed in and learn the important lessons which their attitudes and actions can teach us.

Nathan says

The fifth in this "The Swans are not Silent" series, each book containing the biographies of three men that have made significant contributions to the church down through the ages. Each chapter grows out of a biographical sketch Piper does each year at the Bethlehem Pastor's Conference. They are grouped together in the books under a specific theme that united their lives across both time and geography. This fifth book focuses on the way Tyndale, Judson and Paton represented the sufferings of Christ to the unreached of their generation. Each of them was a seed who fell to the ground and died - and whose sacrifice God used to advance the Gospel in staggering ways. I encourage you to read through this book - the shortest of the five -

but be aware, this is more than a description of the way three men lived over history; it is a clear call to join them in suffering great cost to show others the great Treasure of Jesus Christ through the Gospel. Somewhere, God has appointed someone to hear it from us. Let's go!

Deepseafishing says

Overwhelming, Heartwrenching but above all most encouraging.

Made me think the reality of missions these fathers of faith had paid the price by dying a million deaths before their bodies actually died in the great physical plane.

They are the immense men and women of God. Its not them only many of them unsung heroes who came after them but gave more then all of themselves.

I highly recommend reading this to all those who are Christians under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And to others who are not Christians but searchers, so they can see how only the God of the Bible, The Eternal source of all Joy is so fulfilling, perfect and awesome beyonds words, that people like William Tyndale, Carrey, Adoniram Judson, John Paton and many others in the centuries past gave themselves and all that they have for sharing the Gospel of Lord Jesus to those who have not heard it.

They were the fools for their faith. As Paul said in 1 Cor. Please do read it. May it bless you too as it has blessed me.

James says

The fifth in John Piper's series of biographical sketches, this book gives a glimpse of the lives of global missionaries. William Tyndale, executed for translating the Bible into English. John Paton, persecuted by hostile natives in the South Pacific. Adoniram Judson, losing family and friends in the mission field in Burma. It was very challenging to read in the comfort of a warm house in the United States.

I really like Piper's short biographies as they give me a glimpse into the lives of my older brothers in the faith, and this one was no exception. Recommended for any who enjoy theology and biography.

Per says

I have mostly positive things to say about this small but weighty book. It is slightly bothersome that in the title of the book Adoniram Judson is named but his wives are not mentioned, though they suffered greatly and worked hard in spreading the gospel in Myanmar (Burma). Why cannot the effort of faithful women get as much recognition as those of men like Tyndale, Judson and Paton?

But that being said, it was very inspiring to read about these servants of Jesus Christ who gave away everything in this world for the sake of the Kingdom. Adoniram Judson's sufferings were so many and so great that it is almost impossible to understand how he managed to survive.

Where are the Judsons today?

Theresa Thomas says

Absolutely amazing read!!! I consider myself a hopeless romantic, this book is the epitome of love. We have today in many ways denounced our first love. The passion for t h e purpose of God has been watered down in the last few centuries. Rekindle your passion through a more ripe and receptive love, that is for the purpose of God through our Lord Savior Jesus The Christ...be willing to fill up the afflictions of Christ with your life. God shows us what He needs, plant, water or nourish the seed. "The Swans Are Not Silent"
