

The End of Faith

The end of faith is, or at least should be, the glory of God. In that the ultimate purpose of human existence is the glorification of God, the goal of human faith should also be the glory of God. When faith is misdirected toward any lesser goal, that tends toward the demise of faith.

The case in point has to do with the mission of the church. Mission is, or at least should be, an important consequence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. One could even argue that something would be wrong if the preaching of the gospel did not issue in mission. And yet, there is something far more wrong when mission is elevated from being a consequence of the gospel to being the content of the gospel proclaimed.

When mission becomes the content instead of the consequence of the gospel, then mission becomes the end of faith in both senses: its goal and its demise. Therein lies the problem.

So long as faith maintains its proper end in the glory of God, it is full of confidence in the goodness and power of God and full of good hope for the accomplishment of God's intention in this world and beyond. This gives mission joy and energy. It makes mission worth doing. So long as the church believes in God and in his Christ, there will be no stopping the mission of the church.

But when mission itself becomes the end of faith, the content of proclamation, and the purpose of human life and the church's existence, a terrible somberness descends upon it. It becomes a duty instead of a joy. It becomes a burden instead of a privilege. It becomes the pathetic parade of good works which the church does when the church no longer believes in the good work God has done and is doing. How boring, and how futile!

In order for mission not to be the demise of faith, we need to be sure that mission does not become the goal or purpose of faith. We believe in God and in his Christ, not in mission. Mission is a consequence of the gospel. The only proper end of faith is the glory of God.

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