

How the life of John G. Paton, *a Dreamer of Dreams for Christ*,  
portrays the incomparable worth of Christ.

In Philippians 3:7-8, I learn that a man or a woman can live their life in such a way as to show how valuable Jesus Christ is! It's possible for a man a woman, as a Christian, to live in such a way that their whole life is one big sermon proclaiming that Christ is more valuable than all the world! And the way they do that is by considering everything else, as Paul says, rubbish. As willingly suffering the loss of all things so as to have and treasure Jesus Christ!

And then we learn from verse 17, (and other places like Hebrews 13) that as a church, it is really good for us to spend time thinking about men and women *like that*, who are living that life. In a day when Church is cheap, and the motto is "do as you please" and "do whatever makes you happy", it is *so* good for us to spend some time thinking about a man who counted his whole life as nothing, who willingly parted with absolutely everything, all for the sake of Jesus Christ and his glory. His life *preaches to us* the infinite worth of our Lord Jesus.

That's John Paton. That's why we're focusing on and looking to John Paton. And we want to ask this big question (which will drive our discussion this morning): How does John Paton show us, how does his life *preach to us* the value and worth and glory of Jesus Christ? What in Paton's life shows us that our Lord is supremely valuable?

***First of all, his family life.*** John Paton was born to James and Janet in May of 1824. They lived in southern Scotland, just north of England. John was one of *nine* children. In his autobiography (which is an amazing, fairly simple, extremely captivating, very moving book worth every single person time. This is where I got *almost* all of my information.) he spends a good deal of time telling about his parents.

His dad was a stocking maker. John was *extremely, extremely* close to his father. Reading in this book how John describes his father is very moving. There are three things you need to know about his Dad. **First**, at one point in the book, John is telling us about how his dad became a Christian. His dad was only 17, John wasn't even born yet. At the age of 17 when his dad became a Christian, he began observing daily times of devotion with his family. They called it Family Worship. That meant *singing, praying, and very importantly, reading the Bible and discussing its meaning*. Listen to what his son John says about that practice his father started at 17.

And so began in his seventeenth year that blessed custom of Family Prayer, in morning and evening, which my father practiced probably ***without one single avoidable omission*** until he lay on his deathbed, seventy-seven years of age; when, even to the last day of his life, a portion of Scripture was read, and his voice was heard softly joining in the Psalms, and his lips breathed the morning and evening Prayer... None of us [children] can remember that any day ever passed unhallowed thus; no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar, while the High Priest [their father] led our prayers to God, and offered himself and his children there. (14)

In 60 straight years, nine out of nine children agreed that their father never missed a single Family Devotion! Do not forget that for the rest of this story. In a moment, when I tell you about the life of John Paton, you now don't need to ask, "Wow! *Where did that kind of faith, that kind of courage, that kind of love for the Lord, where did that come from?*" You don't need to ask. I've just told you.

**Second thing you need to know about his Father.** They lived *four miles* away from their church (eight miles roundtrip). In forty years, walking keep in mind, his father was prevented from attending church **three times**. "Once by snow, so deep that he was baffled and had to return; once by ice on the road, so dangerous that he was forced to crawl back up [a certain hill] on his hands and knees, after having descended it so far with many falls; and once by the terrible outbreak of cholera [in the town of the church.]" All communication between the town and the surrounding villages was publicly prohibited. Listen to this, "The farmers and villagers, suspecting that no cholera [outbreak] would make my father stay at home on Sabbath, sent a deputation to my mother on the Saturday evening, and urged her to restrain his devotions for once!" (15) They had to send a group of men from the church to this man's house to make sure he didn't come to church because they knew that even cholera wouldn't keep him away.

Where are the men? What happened to all the real men? I wish I had time to tell you about the *joy* that John says all the children had on the way to and from church, where they would walk with their father and discuss the sermon and rejoice in God together! O I love this man! May God raise up fifty thousand men like this in America today, even right here, in our own church.

### **Third thing you need to know about Dad.**

In the home that John grew up in, *right smack-dab in the center* of the house, John describes this little iddy-biddy room, essentially a center closet. He calls it "sanctuary of that cottage home." (8) After each meal, their father retired to that little room and shut the door. John says that the children began to understand that behind that door, prayers were being poured out for *them*, as the High Priest of Old used to plead and intercede for the people. He occasionally heard his father's trembling echoes pouring out from under the door, sounding, he said, as if he was pleading for his life. They tiptoed past the door so as not to disturb the holy interchange taking place.

He goes on to say that, although the *rest of the world* might not know where that glow and glimmer and smile on his father's face came from, the family knew! They knew it was the glow of his soul having fellowshiped with the Almighty God. His father, aside from the Lord Jesus himself, was the single most defining character on his life. He always went back to this one question, My father "walked with God, why may not I?" (8)

Well, that's the family that John grew up in. And somehow, before we even tell the story of John Paton, you already have expectations about what kind of man he's going to be. Of course you do, look at this Father! We would expect his son to grow up and have that same gut-wrenching, deep-seated passion for the Lord and zeal for holiness. And if that's what you're expecting, you won't be disappointed.

Father and son loved each other so much. It was so great for me to read about what a manly man his dad was, and then to read about the affection that his dad had and showed for him. Those two things are not incompatible, dads. You don't have to choose between being a real man and loving and pouring your hearts out to your children.

When John grew up and was leaving home for good, his father walked a total of 12 miles just to be with him and to say goodbye one last time to him. Paton records a very moving story of that event. His father was praying for him that whole time while they were walking. And when they finally parted ways, his dad grasped his hand and said, ““God bless you, my son! Your father's God prosper you, and keep you from all evil!” Then they separated. When they were walking away, they both turned to see if the other was looking and, they were! Then, they both kept going their separated ways. But *both turned back* and climbed into the ditch of the road to secretly watch the other leaving in tears. I mean, you can't make that kind of relationship up! Praise God for real men who are willing to love and raise up such godly offspring.

Men, there's nothing we can do about *our fathers*. But O to be such dads ourselves! When I look at John Paton's family, when I consider his *mother*, whom he praises as highly as he does his father, when I *think* about the Paton family living in southern Scotland, I see a display of the worth and value of Jesus Christ. When I look at their family, my soul says, “Wow! Christ is truly glorious. They counted everything else as rubbish in this world and they chiefly valued knowing, loving, and following Jesus Christ!” And I want that for myself, for my family, and for my church. So question: what is *your* family saying about the worth of Jesus Christ? Will your children, writing their biographies forty years from now, will they say, “no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar”? What is *your* family saying about the worth of Jesus Christ?

**Second.** Remember our question: what in Paton's life shows us that our Lord is supremely valuable? Second, his surrender to the call to the missionary field.

After he left his father there on the road, he made his way to Glasgow. Eventually the church in Glasgow called him to be the “city missionary”. Basically that was like an evangelist/church planter paid by the association. (33) They planted him in the *worst part of the city* and they wanted him to start a congregation. And he labored very hard, just going from family to family, visiting people, encouraging them, pointing them to Christ. But, by God's grace, folks were being born-again.

Pretty soon, through their evangelism and discipleship efforts, God had used Paton to establish an actual church in their midst. And that church was thriving. It was thriving like wild fire spreads because they were seeking genuine conversions, they were growing genuine disciples, and they were laboring in God's Word! God blessed that.

This mid-twenties young church-planting pastor found himself in a church of an average Sunday attendance of five to six hundred. And his heart and his passion began shifting towards foreign mission work. It wasn't that he heard a voice one day saying, “Go to the mission field.” But rather, as he read the Word, he knew that God is pleased with his people taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. He also knew that there were 50 qualified, gifted men ready to step in and

take over pasturing his church if he were to step down. And, he also began to hear about a group of islands called the New Hebrides that were essentially untouched and completely, totally lost, with no one willing to go and proclaim to them the message of Christ.

Well, he was willing. Because he had an immense love for God and an immense love for people God created, he went!

He says that “nearly all were dead against the proposal” when he said he was leaving. (55) His church tried to bribe him to stay by offering him a parsonage and a huge raise. They tried *guilting him* into staying. The most interesting opposition to him leaving was an old faithful Christian man named Mr. Dickerson, who knew about the New Hebrides. He looked at Paton and objected, “The Cannibals! You will be eaten by Cannibals!” You have to love Paton’s response:

At last I replied, ‘Mr. Dickerson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.’ (56)

That is classic Paton right there. That was his heart. He was saying, “Your right, Mr. Dickerson, I might die and I might be *eaten*. But if I die, I die for Christ. And if I die, I die *in Christ*. And if I die, I’ll raise one day *because* of Christ. So I go to die.”

Paton was going because he valued Christ. He was going because he valued Christ more than he valued fame. Because he felt Christ was more glorious than a big church, big numbers, big honor, and a big reputation. He felt Christ was more valuable than comfortable transportation and nice western food and comfortable houses. He knew Christ was more valuable than all of that, so he said goodbye to those things and he went to tell the Islanders about that glorious Christ. I say *he*; actually *they* because just before he went, he married a young woman named Mary! He mostly just calls her his “dear wife.”

**Third.** His decision to go to and to stay at Tanna.

If you were to draw a straight line on your globe from Honolulu Hawaii to Sydney Australia, follow that line 2/3 of the way to Sydney, right in the heart of the Pacific Ocean there you’d reach a long stretch of islands. Today, that stretch of islands is called Vanuatu. In 1858, the year that John and Mary Paton first set foot on them, they were called the New Hebrides.

Now, you should know something *really important* about these islands. Until 1839, as far as anybody can tell, no Christians had taken the Gospel to this huge stretch of islands. Nobody went to speak and love these natives with the truth that Jesus Christ died for those who trust him; no one called them to repent and cling to the Gospel of Life in Jesus’ name all the way up to 1839! Isn’t that a crying shame? And if that doesn’t melt your heart, consider that there are still islands and places at this hour, there are still entire people groups who have yet to be penetrated with the knowledge and proclamation of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, crucified and risen. *That* ought not be.

But, in 1839, that *changed* for the New Hebrides when the first ever missionaries to those islands landed on the shores of the island of Erromanga. John Williams and his young cohort Harris landed on November 30<sup>th</sup>. A few minutes after they landed, while the ship that dropped them off was still sailing away on the horizon, the natives of the island came out to meet them, when they beat them with clubs, killed them right then and there, and they then proceeded to feast on their dead bodies.

That's the state of missions in the New Hebrides. When Paton sets sail for the New Hebrides, it wasn't like the story of those first two missionaries was eons ago, it had happened less than 20 years ago! That's nothing! So, okay Paton, you feel the burden of the lost, you love people created in God's image, you adore Jesus Christ and the Gospel and you feel compelled to go and declare the story of God's Son as a missionary. Great! Go to China. Go to the Americas. Go, well, go *anywhere* but the string of cannibal islands!

But, there they went. They arrived in 1858, and Mr. and Mrs. Paton, and one other missionary couple, were assigned to the infamous, white-people hating, island of Tanna. The Patons would be on one side of the island, the other couple on another.

Unbelievable right? Of all places, why go to the one you suspect you'll be *eaten*? Because, he was showing, again, the supreme, surpassing value of Christ. Of knowing Christ, of belonging to Christ, and of proclaiming Christ! The Tannese didn't know Jesus. The Tannese had never really *heard* that Christ is supremely valuable. So, he went to show them. And, he didn't go thinking, "I'll be there a few days and then I'll get out." No, they went with the intent of pouring out their lives for Jesus Christ.

Whatever the cost, they were not going to run for their own fear or their own comfort, they were going to show by their lives, by their proclamation, and ultimately by their sacrifice that Jesus is more glorious than all the world and all that the world has to offer. In Jesus Christ, even *death* is gain! (Phil. 1:21)

Four months after they landed, Mary gave birth to their first son. For two days, everything seemed great. But then, suddenly, his dear darling, as he calls her, came down with ague and fever. That's like malaria. They found out later that they kept getting this because they had built their house on a really bad spot on the island. After a month of wrestling with this sickness, Paton writes,

Diarrhea ensued, and symptoms of pneumonia, with slight delirium at intervals; and then in a moment, altogether unexpectedly, she died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. To crown my sorrows, and complete my loneliness, the dear baby-boy, whom we had named after her father, Peter Robert Robson, was taken from me after one week's sickness, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me; as for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrow. (79)

We can't grasp that sorrow. Some of you, no doubt, have had similar sorrow, but I can only imagine, having arrived on a heathen island, filled with people who hate me and seem to have only one desire: my destruction, separated from all people who speak my language, not having a single person to offer a word of encouragement or consolation in my grief, now losing my dearly

beloved wife after less than two years of marriage, and then *immediately afterwards* losing my brand new baby boy who was all that I had left of my beloved wife. And, alone. Alone! In the middle of the South Pacific. That's why he says, "It would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrow." And he doesn't, he just moves on in the story. It's like it was too sacred of ground for him to recount in his autobiography.

And I thought as I read, "LEAVE! Go home! They don't even want you. They knew you built your house in a dangerous spot and they didn't care to tell you. They didn't offer one iota of assistance. They hate you! And your wife and son have died so you can be with folks who despise you. Leave!" But he didn't. He didn't.

And now I think about a parable Jesus told. There was a man, who, by God's grace, one day in the middle of a field stumbled upon a rare jewel, a hidden treasure. And although the field was very expensive, that man went home immediately, put every single one of his possessions up for sale and he bought that field right then and there. He lost everything, but he gained the treasure. And best of all, Jesus says, that man gave up *everything* with joy! In his *joy*, he gave up all for the sake of the treasure.

Christ is the treasure. And Paton sold *everything* dear to him for the sake of that treasure. And, by God's grace, he did it with *joy*! O the incomparable riches of this treasure. O how much this treasure is truly worth. He is worth it all. Beloved, he is worth everything.

**Fourth.** His willingness to trust God's Control of circumstances and situations in the face of danger.

Let me tell you a bit about the island of Tanna and its inhabitants. It was about 75 square miles and it was chocked full of natives. It was everything you think of when you hear tropical island. Beautiful weather. Big banana trees. Sunsets over the gorgeous beaches of the deep blue Pacific.

But then, there were the people. The whites called them Savages or Heathens. They were as primitive as people could be. When Paton arrived on the island, he was shocked to find that everybody was essentially wearing only their birthday suits. Sometimes they made feeble attempts at covering up a certain area, but really, there was no such thing as modesty. (Remember, this is only 150 years ago! In fact, this is right about the same time HHBC was being founded.)

The natives were not organized into a government or anything like that. Essentially they were scattered all over the island in little iddy-biddy villages a few miles apart. Each little village had their own chief. They lived in huts and foraged the land and tried to grow very primitive crops.

The whole island was truly ruled by two things: the club and the fear of the Sacred Men. Everywhere the men went, they carried their club and throwing stones which they used to hit their victims on the head and stun them so they could club them to death. That was essentially the rule of the island. Murder was no big deal. People were murdered every single day. In fact,

murderers were honored. It was kill or be killed. If you were upset about something, you got out your club. If your wife wasn't carrying your load like you asked her to, you clubbed her to death and your other wives took that as a warning. And, as the ultimate display of the sinfulness and depravity of man apart from the Gospel, once you killed whoever it was you disliked, your village got together and seriously, truly, ate that person. They were full-fledged honest to goodness regular cannibals.

Paton says that they practiced it so much that some of them got a real taste and wicked desire for human flesh. So much so that some of them would dig up recently buried bodies to turn around and eat them. They had no value and no understanding of the sanctity and value of human life. That is reflected, not only in their cannibalism, but also in that they so easily murdered, they exposed their infants and let them die if they didn't want them. Parents didn't care to parent their children. So children, when they were grown, didn't care to tend to their aged parents and just let them die.

That is a mark of a lost and degenerate society. The loss of the sanctity of life, that is the *hallmark* of a society under the judgment of God, Romans 1. And, I'm sad to say, that is a very similar place to which we find ourselves today.

So Tanna was ruled by the club, *and by their Sacred Men*. Sacred Men were like witch doctors who communicated with evil spirits. The Tannese believed that an evil spirit ruled them and controlled sickness and death. When they were mad at someone, the Sacred Men would go through this strange ritual and curse that individual. That is where they believed all bad things like sickness and injury and storms came from. That meant each time someone got sick, they believed that their *enemies* had cursed them. So they would go attacking and just constant wars all around.

These islanders were so primitive they had never even considered the concept that spoken language could be communicated through *the written word* until the Missionaries arrived. (By the way, they called the Missionaries *Missi*.)

Well that's sufficient to give you an idea of who the people were. His approach to missions was very simple and yet, I think, spot on. He moved into their midst, made his living among them, he focused on trying to learn their language. Then, once he knew the basics, he began to reduce their words down into a written language for them. That way he could begin translating things, especially God's Word, into their new written language. That's such a must. Then he began befriending them, helping them, loving them, and pouring out his life for them. All the while, every single day, he would travel from village to village to village, having a "worship service" each time where Scripture was taught, they prayed, and maybe even sang. But in that way, he began saturating all the villages with God's Word and truth about Jesus Christ, all while he was loving them and pouring out his life for them in many different ways.

After years of labor, sacrifice, and constant danger, here's the result: they *hated* him more than ever. At first they listened to what he had to say, mostly because it was new and because he gave them gifts. But over time, they were progressively hardened. They would come to the services but they would talk, laugh, mock, and just ignore him. All of the sicknesses and

tragedies that happened to the island were blamed on him and on his Jehovah God. One of the most amazing things to me is that as the Islanders began understanding the Gospel, *they* found it to be so foolish! That's exactly what Paul said, too. Our message is foolishness to those who are perishing.

The whole time he was on the island, there were always Natives threatening him. More times than I could count he tells us having painted men surrounding his hut at night, whispering, waiting to sling a stone at him or fire one of the muskets they got from white traders right into his skull. He would lock the doors and just hunker down until it was over. Several days, while he was going about his chores and building projects, a certain man would follow him *all day* in silence pointing his musket at him, ready to shoot. What restrained him? I have no idea. This happened several times. Honestly, I have *no idea* what earthly reason could have restrained all of them. They were killers. They murdered each other every day. They murdered and ate white people every opportunity they got. They said they were going to kill him. They had the means and the opportunity. But *something*, Someone restrained them.

But what truly shows and displays the worth and glory of Jesus Christ is that he just kept on preaching! To those who hated him, to those who wished him dead, to those who murdered another white missionary who came to help him, to those who watched his wife die, to those who blamed him personally for all of their colds and fevers, he just kept on preaching! Even when they pointed guns in his face, he was such a courageous, manly man. At first I thought it was funny, but eventually I just got used to it. I don't know how many times someone would be pointing a musket at him, or holding a club up over their head to strike him, and he would just walk up to them and say, "Hey, stop it! I'm your friend. I love you. I'm here to tell you about God and Jesus Christ." And he would grab the end of their musket and just move it away. Or lower their club and walk away. And then he would go back tomorrow and do the same thing again.

He did that, he persisted in proclaiming and sharing God's Word with his whole life until it became apparent one day that the whole island was headed his way. Through a series of events, what amounted to essentially every village on Tanna decided that the Missionary must die. They hated him; they hated Jehovah God; they hated the Worship, as they called it. He must be killed and eaten without delay. On probably the worst day of his life, Paton managed to escape by sea.

One of my favorite little lines in the book was as he's talking about sailing away from those murderous, cannibal, missionary hating, God-despising natives, and he calls them, "my dear islanders." (229) As far as fruit goes, he could not discern that a single one of them ever truly repented and submitted to Jesus Christ! And as they are trying to kill him and he is fleeing, he thinks back with affection and says, "My dear islanders."

Where did that *come* from? Where did affection for those people come from? Why did he do all of that? Only for Christ. Only because of Christ. Only because Christ was so incomparably glorious to him, was he propelled to love those islanders with undying love, to give himself totally, and unreservedly to them, and to not hold back for one second in declaring to them that

Jesus Christ died, rose, and is exalted as Lord right this moment, and that they must repent and trust that to be saved. That was his treasure.

Before we leave off his time at Tanna, we had to stop and ask the question: what was it that sustained him through these tribulations? The answer is what I have started calling the twin pillars of the Christian life. The unshakeable life of the Christian is founded on two pillars: God is Good; and God is in control. John Paton believed in a big, absolutely in control of everything and reigning over everything God. And, simultaneously, he believed the Gospel; he believed that he was reconciled to God in Jesus Christ and that God was now *for him* as a son, not against him. So he was under-girded with those twin pillars: a God who does what is ultimately best for him, and a God who has all the control in the world. He was truly unshakable. He said one time, "Had it not been for the assurance that I was engaged in His service, and that in every path of duty He would carry me through *or* dispose of me therein for His glory, I could never have undertaken [this] journey." (148)

See, that's the source of his undying courage to walk up to a man pointing a musket at him and says, "Don't do that. Believe instead of the Lord Jesus Christ." That *courage* came from his assurance that the Lord would do good with that situation, **either** by delivering him, or by having him killed! Either way, Paton believed in such a big God that he knew God would be glorified even through Paton's death. Whether by life or death, God would work good and bring glory to himself through Paton. So the man had no fear. Only good could come. He rebuked murderers and he slept next to Cannibals and he befriended his worst enemies. May these same twin pillars support *us* in the hour of our trials, and may these pillars supply us with undying courage to go on sharing Christ.

At this point, the other missionaries decide that since he has been run off of Tanna, they could really use him to do some traveling for them to raise money and to spread a passion for missions. Well, he takes that up a bit reluctantly because his heart is still in missions. Paton traveled all over the world and God blessed his preaching so much that he used him to spread an abiding passion for the work of foreign missions. Countless missionaries were raised up through his story, and countless funds were given to the cause of missions in the New Hebrides because of him.

All the while though, his passion and his love and his desire were still set on Tanna and the New Hebrides islands. He would have gone back to the islands in a heartbeat! Eventually, he had the chance. By this time, he was remarried and the fundraising was over for now. So he heads back to the New Hebrides, but the other missionaries will not agree to him going to Tanna.

But, there was another island, very small and very close to Tanna called Aniwa. They all agreed that he could go there and hope that that would lead to an open door at Tanna eventually. He was 42 when he went sailed for Aniwa.

Aniwa, when he got there, was almost identical to Tanna in terms of people, customs, pagan worship and idolatry, murders, cannibalism, etc. Unfortunately the only real difference was that they spoke a totally unique language so he had to start that process all over again.

As I read and studied, I saw two main things that made his experience on Aniwa so different from that on Tanna: first, he had his wife with him this time for good. Second, God miraculously brought an important chief to repentance from his idolatry and he trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation.

The presence of his wife was so significant because it enabled them to start an orphanage. There were so many children in desperate need. So many parents were murdered, so many children abandoned, so many exposed to die. So there were tons of needy children. And the Patons essentially *adopted* them all. That's basically what their "orphanage" was. And friends, the Patons *poured their hearts and lives* out for these children. That right there might just have changed the eternal fate of Aniwa.

This is something that our church cannot say often enough: a Word of God saturated *family* is the most effective ministry. A word saturated family is the most effective ministry. There is absolutely nothing that compares to beloved parents laboring night and day to live faithfully before their children, to discipline them faithfully according to God's Word, and to daily speak to them God's Word and point them to their need for Jesus Christ! That makes adoption the greatest *extension* of your ministry available! God *loves* the idea of Christians adopting children so they can invest their lives in them and love them with the Gospel.

The Patons loved those children with the Gospel by adopting them. They led them everyday in the fear of the Lord. They talked to them about Christ. They taught them God's Word. They had family worship every single day.

(Family worship was an important theme throughout the whole book. One of the first signs of conversion was people wearing modest clothing. Another was the practice of daily family devotions and prayers in the home. How can we *overestimate* the value of having a specified, disciplined time in every single day where we pray with and for our children, read God's life-giving, saving Word to them, where we tell them again and again of the righteousness of Jesus, and we encourage them daily to trust them. Not to mention where we show them that being a Christian is not a Sunday activity but an entire life transformed by the Gospel. How can we *overestimate* the value of *that*? May God raise up faithful families to recover the lost practice of daily family devotions where God's Word is read and prayed over and sung.)

That had an unfathomable impact on the island of Aniwa because children grow up. And as these now godly, redeemed children became godly, redeemed young adults, Aniwa was changed.

The second thing that made Paton's Aniwa experience so different from that on Tanna was the glorious conversion of a chief named Namakei. And this is where we see the *sixth* answer to our question: what in this story shows the incomparable value of knowing Christ?

The conversion of this chief changed the whole island. He was really probably the first true convert that Paton saw. Paton had been growing closer to him because Namakei was just interested in what Paton was doing. But eventually, the Gospel took root in his heart and God

made the light of the glory of Jesus Christ shine in his heart: he believed and began immediately turning from his sinful ways. Everybody saw it.

Let me just recount for you kind of how that happened. The entire island had no permanent source of fresh water. There was no pure spring or water hole. The islanders for years and years had just collected and stored rain water when it came. And their bodies had adjusted to having and using very little water. But the Patons were suffering incredibly from lack of water. In fact, he thought it might actually be the death of them if they didn't do something about it. So, he resolved to try and sink a well, even though he had absolutely no scientific knowledge of how to go about that.

At this time, chief Namakei was not yet a committed Christian. He just appeared interested. When Paton told the chief that he planned on digging a hole to get a supply of fresh water, he says that the chief look at him with astonishment, and said in a tone of sympathy approaching to pity, "O Missi! [That's what the islanders called him. Missi as in *missionary*.] O Missi! Wait till the rain comes *down*, and we will save all we possibly can for you." I replied, "We may all die for lack of water. If no fresh water can be gotten, we may be forced to leave you."

The old chief did not want that at all! So he looked imploringly and said, "O Missi! You must not leave us for that! Rain comes only from above. How could you expect our Island to send up showers of rain from below?" When Paton tried to explain it to him, the chief thought Missi was going crazy from heat stroke and said, "O Missi, your head is going wrong; you are losing something or you would not talk wild like that. Don't let our people hear you talking about going down into the earth for rain, or they will never listen to your word or believe you again." (346-347)

Well, there was an initial disappointment when their first attempt collapsed and they had to start over. But they got smarter the second go. When Paton finally struck water, and when he tasted, praise God, that it was actually fresh, drinkable water, well Aniwa would never be the same again! The natives were awe-struck. They had mocked him and chided him and doubted him, but they were overwhelmed when he came out of the well with fresh water and told them that he intended to share this well with every single person on the island.

The chief, more than anyone else, was really touched. And to show it, he did the most amazing thing. He asked the Missionary if, instead of Paton preaching Sunday at the weekly gathering, he asked if *he*, the *chief*, might not address the people. Paton nervously agreed. And Sunday morning, the entire island gathered to hear this amazing thing, a pagan, cannibal chief addressing people in the worship service of Jehovah. Namakei the chief began to address them like this: (*we read a selection from his autobiography where the Chief proclaims his undying devotion to Jehovah God and to worshipping Him*).

From that day on, Namakei worshipped the Lord. Paton disciplined him and he lived such a compelling life that *others* began to come. They disciplined *them* and everyone progressed in their knowledge of God, not just seeking a quick, easy decision for Jesus, but they sought after *disciples* and *life-long committed* followers of Jesus Christ, who would struggle everyday to put

off their sins and to grow in holiness. And as that began taking root on Aniwa, the testimony of converted cannibals was so powerful, and the Word of God was so *compelling* in their converted mouths, the **entire island of Aniwa was claimed for Jesus Christ!** (312) Without exception, every speaking soul on the island eventually, at least outwardly, submitted to the sole worship of Yahweh, the God of the Bible *through* Jesus Christ!

To kind of finish the story, the best testimony that could ever be given about a mission like this happened to Aniwa. Mr. and Mrs. Paton and their several children, and there many adopted children, spent 15 years on Aniwa, loving the people, pointing them to Christ, and teaching God's Word. When they left the whole island claimed Christ as Lord. And Paton had so disciplined the converts and raised up leaders that no missionaries had to come and take over for Paton. The church was now fully self-sufficient, and years later as Paton continued to visit occasionally, the church was growing and doing better than ever.

Chief Namakei said it best: Aniwa was turned upside down by the coming of the Word of God to that island. Praise God! To see those former cannibals declaring to their neighbors the Gospel of God, to read of them laying down their former idols at the foot of the fire to be burned as worthless! When I hear of the formerly pagan chiefs counting their former lives as loss to go and declare the truth of Gospel to other islanders, even to other islands! Oh I see such a wonderful display of how infinitely more valuable Christ is than *all those other things!*

If your life were like an auction, what price/value have you set on Christ? What is your life, your family, your evangelism, your schedule, your priorities, what are *those things* saying about how much you value Christ and about how much he is worth?

Paton sold his life *cheap*. As nasty as that sounds, that's exactly what Christ calls us to do. To suffer all things as loss. To take up our cross (an instrument of death) and to die every single day! To willingly say "Goodbye" to everything we value and cherish in this life to live for and promote the glory of Jesus Christ! Friends, he is infinitely valuable. And I pray that the life of John Paton will continue to proclaim to you that wonderful message.

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