

Global Missions in Biblical Perspective  
*Until He Returns*  
“A Missionary’s Letter to a Mission-Sending Church”  
Philippians 1:3–11  
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March 4, 2018 • Morning Sermon

We will be looking at Philippians 1. This is God’s Word and it is inspired by God. God’s Word is inerrant because God cannot err and it is infallible because it is utterly dependable for all that we believe and practice. Philippians 1:3–11 says [3] *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, [4] always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, [5] because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. [6] And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. [7] It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. [8] For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. [9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

At the end of this service we will be bringing our faith promise cards forward to put at the feet of our sent ones. These cards not only contain our commitment of our resources for the work of the Gospel to go to the nations but also our commitment to prayer for a strategic prayer plan. Also, God may be calling you to cross-cultural missions or to give leadership on the Global Missions Team or short-term missions or any other questions and we’ll be happy to get back with you on any questions you have, especially Bryan Wintersteen our mission’s pastor who can answer any of these questions you may have on missions. This card is prayer plan, personal plan and a financial plan. Why? That is what I’ll answer in this study.

Two things have been on my mind as we have prepared for this missions conference. One is that Kathy Cheely the wife of our previous missions’ pastor Tom Cheely who is now with the Lord, shared with me something which came from what was known as the ‘record’ that she found with some of Tom’s things. It came from 1983 and I have now put this in my belongings. It was sent to the members of Briarwood in that year and this is what it said;

“Briarwood is the sponsoring church for establishing through the mission of North America of the PCA, the first flagship church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Lane Thigpen is the chairman of the flagship church committee and he now reports that Christ Covenant Church with Reverend Harry Reeder as organizing pastor is flourishing. Nine months into the ministry, they began in February of 1983 with 35 to 40 in attendance and they now have started meeting in a school. Now they have 125 in attendance. So let’s praise the Lord Briarwood for this progress and continue to pray for the growth of this new flagship church that we are sponsoring.”

The first flagship church was a church that would help plant a church where there was no PCA church in a metropolitan town and that church would be committed to planting other churches so that there would be a Presbytery there.

There is a little story behind that story. It started with the phone call I received from two of my PCA mentors over a period of a couple of months, Dr. Barker and Terry Geiger. They were the ones who wanted me to go and start this flagship church. They asked me to pray about it but I said 'no' for a couple of reasons. The first time they asked me to go it was in January of 1982 and I was in Miami, Florida, playing golf in 82 degree weather, but serving at a church there in Miami. I said 'No, I think the Lord has called me right here.' So I made a commitment to stay where I was at, at the peril of my own well-being. I can still hear Dr. Barker telling me that I just need to pray about it. I continued to pray about it and long story short the next thing I know my wife and I are packing up from Miami to head to Charlotte in January of 1983. At our first Sunday there in February, fittingly there was six inches of snow on the ground.

This 'record' I read where we had started with about 38 people was actually written a few months after I had been there where we then had gotten up to 125 in attendance and had moved over to meet at Charlotte Christian School. Another story after I had initially said 'no' I came up to Birmingham to meet with Mr. Thigpen's committee and Frank Barker to be interviewed. We got all the way through the interview and I thought things were going great until someone on the committee said "Is this going to be a good idea to pay him \$25,000 a year to go to Charlotte, North Carolina to start a church, isn't that where Billy Graham's from? Do we really need to plant a PCA church in Charlotte?" Another said 'Well, we don't have a PCA church there.' Then it went back to the one who questioned the idea and he said 'To pay him \$75,000 over a period of three years, do you know what that could do for the foreign mission field? Do we really want to do this?'

I was beginning to wonder why I actually came up here for I could see the whole project just disappearing right in front of me and I had been praying through this. There was a lot of silence and then Frank spoke up and said 'Praise the Lord. Harry, is this church going to do missions?' I said 'Yes sir.' Frank said 'Is this church going to send out members of that church to be missionaries?' I said 'God willing.' Frank said 'Is this church going to do faith promise giving?' I said, 'Yes sir.' He said 'Sounds like a good idea to me and I think it's a good \$75,000 investment.' Then they took a vote and it was unanimous and I was back on track again to go plant this church in Charlotte. I went onto Charlotte and the Lord blessed in multiple ways so I want to tie that story in with another story.

This one has to do with Uganda and I'm reminded of this with our missionaries who have attended our mission's conference who continue to carry forward what's been known to be the central Africa revival. My first trip to Uganda was in 1985 which was two years after I went to plant the church in Charlotte where we had taken on Uganda as a mission field from Christ Covenant. This was when the revolution was still continuing there in Uganda where the AKA 47 machine gun fire was every night. Everywhere we went we had guards with us, no electricity, no water and I was there for two weeks. It was just an unbelievable challenge but it was also incredible to see the unbelievable work of the Gospel that was taking place as we did door to door evangelism, school evangelism, meetings in churches and just two weeks of non-stop evangelism.

One of the places we went in Uganda was Luweero. Not long before I had gotten to Luweero we had a pastors conference there with over 200 pastors that seemed like we were out in what seemed like the bush. Museveni had just uncovered by digging up a road that had been built by his predecessors Obote and Idi Amin where many Christians had been killed. His predecessors claim to be Islamic but were actually in reality Satanist. When they had built this road they had used the bodies of 500 Christians as filler so when this road was dug up people

realized the stories they had heard on this were actually true. These Christians were killed for confessing Christ. I actually saw the price these Christians had paid for Christ to be faithful to Him when I was there in Uganda. Now I was there speaking to over 200 saying 'I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

Another piece of this story was that there was a young man who was a deacon there in the church in Uganda and he was kind of my personal host as he would take care of me. He would talk with me and minister to me. One of the things he did in the morning and afternoon is that he would walk almost five miles an orange bottled drink because I couldn't drink the water there for fear of getting sick. He also did a number of other things for me but when we were at the end of this trip I said to the team of people that went with me from Christ Covenant "Put on what you are going to wear all the way home and leave everything else in your suitcase to leave here for these pastors to give to their members." Everybody thought it was a great idea and so that's what we did.

I took some of my things along with another man's things and I folded them up to give to that deacon who had been so gracious to us as he had done so many things for us throughout the week. I told him through an interpreter that I wanted to give these things to him and as tears filled his eyes he said 'God sent you to bring this to me and now I have something to give to others who are in need.' What a heart!! He just saw the things I was giving to him as resources to give to someone else. He was receiving to give. I said 'No, we have things to give you for that but I want you to keep this for you.' He was utterly overwhelmed and took it and then saw him walk away with it.

Those stories are actually connected with what I want to share with you in this study. In Philippians 1 we see this phenomena that is absolutely amazing and that is the notion of Gospel partnership. I want to show you how all of this fits in with the theme verse for our conference from Matthew 24:14 which says *[14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.* So when will Jesus come back? He'll come back when all the elect have been saved from all the nations through the Gospel preaching to all the nations.

Here are four things that sum up what we have learned during this missions conference and its theme. Number one, we have learned with clarity what our mission is. There are a lot of good things that the church needs to be engaged in as a consequence to the mission but our singular mission is to go and make disciples of all the nations and wonderfully in the Bible we have how to do that. Thankfully we don't have to rethink it or re-engineer it or invent it but all we have to do is look at what the Apostles did and this is how they did it. In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most part of the world, every time they went to a city the first thing they would do was Gospel evangelism and discipleship. The next thing they did was to plant a Gospel church or revitalize (strengthen) the church that had already been planted. Thirdly, they did Gospel deeds of love and mercy. Fourthly, they did Gospel leadership multiplication and mobilization to mature, multiply and mobilize leaders to define, develop and deploy Gospel leaders.

The mission of Briarwood is for God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God and reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. The reason I give beyond the tithe to missions is because I know the missions committee is being diligent to not only vet, interview, hold responsible those whom we call and send to do those four things from the Apostolic profile given to us in the Bible that I just mentioned. I want my resources to go to the fulfillment of that and that's our aim in the way our resources are used.

Secondly, we learned that our message is the Gospel as the foundation, formation and motivation of our mission but as we bring the Gospel we also bring the whole counsel of God. In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20 it says [19] *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* The whole counsel of God is to be taught from the foundation, formation and motivation of the Gospel.

Thirdly, our mission field is everybody in the world and all the nations of the world. Fourthly, our mandate is to do this as long as we have breath or until Jesus comes back. This is our summation now in considering all this we have an amazing opportunity.

Our opportunity is partnership. Both John and Paul use this concept of partnership. 3 John 1:5–8 says [5] *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, [6] who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. [7] For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. [8] Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

They were not sent on in a manner worthy of their worth but the worth of Christ and the Gospel is to determine how we send them out. He says on the one hand they don't get anything from the Gentiles, don't seek support from them but the Lord sends them and sends them with the support of His people. We are to send them in a manner worthy of God that we may be fellow workers, partners with the work of the Gospel.

Paul does the same thing. Did you know that there was only one church that Paul allowed to support him? Paul was a tent maker. He was known as by-vocational. The only church allowed to support him was the church at Philippi. In Philippians he is writing back to them and I always tell missionaries to read this book of the Bible because this is a missionary letter to a mission sending church. Paul is basically telling them they are partners with him.

There is another piece to this and that's the understanding of synergy. What do I mean by synergy? Here is an illustration of what I mean. First I want to tell you what a partnership is. A partnership is an agreement between two or more individuals or organizations to materially cooperate for the purpose of fulfilling a mutual mission. Two or more is us and we get to work together. By the way, we get to work with Briarwood and Briarwood gets to work with all other kinds of churches in the Kingdom of God and that's called synergy. The greatest piece of this partnership is not only that synergy is that we're all working together but synergy comes because the Lord is working in and through us. Now there's a senior partner for you. Synergy is the notion of the output of two working together is greater than the output of the two working separately.

Let me us my dear wife Cindy here. She and I have been working together now for 49 years. If I do my work and Cindy does her work and then we add it up, then praise the Lord but if Cindy and I do our work together then that sum of that work is going to be greater than the sum of our individual work added together. That's what happens with me and you when we work together as a church, as a body of believers instead of lone ranger Christianity. This also includes us working with other churches and other denominations. So not only do we get the blessings from this synergy but we get the blessings of the synergy of the Lord. He says 'I will be with you until the end of the age.'

We are in an age that is marked by two things. One is the continual death spiral of sin in our age with wars, brokenness and all the stuff that comes with sin and the continued advance of

the Gospel. Until the end of this age we are about a Great Commission and He is with us till the end of the age so that the Gospel of the Kingdom keeps expanding even as the Kingdom of darkness continues to disintegrate. As these two things happen God's people begin to see things that are beyond their comprehension with the blessing of synergy as we work together and the blessing of God working in, alongside and with us.

Then we get to see five loaves and two fishes feed thousands of people where it's not only the little boy working with the Disciples and the Disciples working with the little boy but then we get to see Jesus showing up. Now there's a fish and chips dinner. Can you imagine what that little boy going home that day? Momma, I gave all my fishes and loaves and you won't believe what happened next! This was not only the synergy of everyone working together but it was the Lord's work in it and through it and how He multiplies it and mobilizes it.

That is what Paul is talking about when he is talking about the partnership with Philippi. Here is what Gospel partnership looks like. Philippians 4:10–14 says *[10] I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. [11] Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. [12] I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. [13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* (Paul recognizes that God's strength shows up through His people.)

*[14] Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.* They partnered with him in the work of grace, in the proclamation of the Gospel and when he was put into jail for when he was put in jail they were put in jail, as they suffered with him. When he was in chains they were in chains. They were partners with him, had supported him and were engaged with him in all that he was going through. When we saw that there were 182,000 presentations of the Gospel from our missionaries that we supported, when they presented the Gospel we presented the Gospel – you who prayed for them, supported them, went on short-term mission trips with them, who led them through our Global missions team. When 40,000 plus prayed to received Christ with those who were praying with them, you were praying with them. When our missionaries were facing challenges you were facing challenges with them. There is a partnership, an engagement of what was taking place. So what happens in a partnership?

Philippians 4:15–20 says *[15] And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. [16] Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. [17] Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. [18] I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. [19] And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. [20] To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

When you give to the Lord He is not going to be a debtor to you because you can't give anything until He has given it to you. He will supply all of your needs. Paul gives this dynamic in partnership in giving and engagement personally here. When that missionary, Paul, does his work then this mission sending church was engaged in partnership. They sent people, praying for him, giving to his needs and they were receiving from him even as he was receiving from them. All of those things were the dynamics of the partnership.

So here is the takeaway for this study. Since all of us believers have the same mission, message, mission field and mandate then everyone is a missionary until He returns by a

partnership of going, sending, praying, receiving, and giving because the love of Christ compels us, the Gospel consumes us and the lost concern us. If you are not a missionary then you are a mission field and I want you to come to Jesus. I long for you, I plead for you to come to Christ for the King is calling you to everlasting life. So if you have done that then you are missionary.

This takeaway is not necessarily calling you to cross cultural missions but wherever you live you are to go and tell people about Christ and when you send others who are gifted and called you go with them. You send them out by praying for them. This is the number one thing for you to do to have a strategic prayer plan for world missions just as the Lord lays it upon your heart. You also go by receiving for there is none of us who give what we didn't first receive from the Lord. If today you're a Christian then that's because God sent someone to you. Somebody prayed for you. The Holy Spirit came to you through someone that was sent to you and from the wings of the prayers that others had brought to the throne of grace for you. We are also partners because we're giving. We are giving ourselves, the Gospel and resources to get the work of the Gospel out there.

How do I do it? My wife, Cindy and I do it by going through three 'S's' on our faith promise which is what we give beyond the tithe. We start by praying through it. The first is we do it systematically – what can we give beyond our tithe regularly? Then we sacrifice – what is it we were planning on doing or we are doing that this year we'll give up for world missions? Now I can see what I'm going to give systematically and sacrificially. Then thirdly we look at it supernaturally – what do we believe that God is going to plunder from the Egyptians to throw into our chariot along the way? This is something we don't see.

When Cindy and I first started faith promise giving early on in our marriage and we gave .25 cents that wasn't even systematically or sacrificially because that was just supernaturally from the get go. I was attending a private college, had three part time jobs, a wife, a child and one on the way, I wondered "Lord, where is this going to come from?" But we were just going to believe God for it and that's where we were. Supernatural is what we sense God is going to bring to us and by faith we are going to trust that and then we promise that when He brings it to us it will get through us for this cause of world evangelism.

We do this because the love of Christ compels us and has increasingly done it throughout our life and your life. The concern for the lost consumes us as well as the Gospel. So today, here is your opportunity. If the love of Christ compels you, the Gospel consumes you and the lost headed to hell concern you in all the nations then this is our opportunity to get in partnership with those whom God has called to take the Gospel in evangelism and discipleship, church planting and church revitalization, deeds of mercy that affirm the Gospel and leaders who are developed and deployed, multiplied and mobilized for the Gospel.

To finish my earlier story as I handed the folded clothes to the deacon in Uganda who so graciously served us while we were there, I saw him take what I had given him up to the communion table where he placed it, he knelt down, raised his hands and began to praise the Lord. But I wouldn't have been there to train those pastors to go door to door evangelism and share resources if Christ Covenant hadn't sent me. That deacon was right when he said to me 'the Lord sent you' for He did send me through Christ Covenant. There also wouldn't have been a Christ Covenant if you hadn't sent me there to plant it.

I have often thought of Frank's words to that chairman of the committee when he said to me "Well, if you're committed to missions, with members going and faith promise giving then I think it's a good investment." Fifteen years after Christ Covenant was planted our denomination did a study of Christ Covenant and they had sent 120 plus missionaries, giving 12 million dollars

to the mission field and Briarwood had committed \$75,000. That is a partnership. That was synergy. I could spend so much time telling you about the threads of that Providence and that is the kind of stuff that is happening all the time.

This is why I want you in and to know it through going, sending, praying, receiving and giving for when they go we go. When we send they go and we get the opportunity to pray for it and support it. Take some time to consecrate your commitment to world missions in prayer and how god is going to multiply that synergy effect. Some of you may still be working through this and that is certainly understandable. Take this time now as a time of consecration, contemplation and reflection on what the Lord wants to do through you for world missions. The Lord is our vision.

Use the lyrics of the hymn *Be Thou My Vision* as a closing prayer for this study.

Prayer:

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.  
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.*

*Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;  
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.*

*Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;  
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;  
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:  
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.*

*Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,  
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,  
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.*

*High King of Heaven, my victory won,  
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all. Amen.*

#### Power Point

##### A SUMMATION

- I. Our Mission
- II. Our Message
- III. Our Mission Field
- IV. Our Mandate

##### AN OPPORTUNITY

Partnership and Synergy

An agreement between two or more individuals or organizations to materially cooperate for the purpose of fulfilling a mutual mission.

#### LIFE TAKEAWAY

Since all of us have the same Mission, Message, Mission field and Mandate, then...

Everyone is a Missionary “until He returns” by a Partnership of...

- Going
- Sending
- Praying
- Receiving
- Giving

Because the Love of Christ compels us, the Gospel consumes us and the lost concern us.