

2020 Global Ministries Conference  
*Fellow Workers for the Truth*  
“Briarwood’s Stewardship of World Missions: A Biblical Case Study”  
Philippians 1, 4  
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March 1, 2020 • Morning Sermon

We will be looking at Philippians 1 and 4 in this study. We’ll start in chapter 1. I love Arthur W. Tozer’s book Gleanings from Paul: Studies in the Prayers of the Apostle where he analyzes 17 of Paul’s prayers and this is one of them. I will highlight just one aspect of it so here is the prayer from the Word of God, which is the truth from 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.

If you want to read about the planting of the church at Philippi, read Acts 16 for you will find an amazing church plant. This past week I received a call from man who was asking if Briarwood would like to participate in starting a church with them. He sent us the information and the question was ‘are you parachuting in or do you have core a group?’ The Apostle Paul parachuted into Philippi and he had a core group with a couple of days. This was a unique church that alone was allowed to participate from the first day until the end in financial, prayer and personal support of the Apostle Paul on a regular basis. This church from the day it was planted until the day Paul finds himself in prison was engaged with him in the partnership of the Gospel. How did this church get here?

Paul had a core group. He had a girl who was demon possessed that was liberated. He had a jailer and his family who was converted when God freed Paul and all the prisoners who all remained. This jailer said ‘what must I do to be saved?’ Paul told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household. Then he had Lydia, a business woman who was likely a proselytized into Judaism, but then came to Christ when Paul came and presented the Gospel. She and her household then became a work of the Gospel here in Philippi. That is the core group Paul started with and it kept growing.

I have had the opportunity to stand on what is known as the Egnatian Way. Rome built all kinds of highways. You’ve probably heard the statement ‘all roads lead to Rome.’ This was one of those roads that led through Macedonia through Greece and ended up back at Rome. It would have been considered a double wide highway back then and right where it runs, beside it is a jail. Historically it is likely the place Paul was. Even more accurate is right above it is the Bema, the judgment seat where Paul was tried for the Gospel and secured the fact that Christians should be able to function within the Roman Empire. It’s an amazing place to stand.

Paul leaves there and now is writing a letter back to them from another jail in Rome. Here is a church that was basically planted in a jail. He writes to them with concerns and also thanks. Let's back up a little bit more. After Paul and Barnabas went on a missionary journey they came back to Antioch. Acts 16 gives us the account of their second missionary journey. Paul arrives in what we call today Turkey. He wants to go south toward Ephesus but the Holy Spirit says 'no' and then he wants to go north but again the Spirit says 'no.' Paul knows he is not supposed to go back and then comes a vision. The Scripture is still being unfolded so Paul gets Divine revelation. Paul has a vision of a man who says 'come over to Macedonia and help us.' This is his Macedonian call.

As Paul crosses the Aegean Sea he lands at a place called Neopolis, then to Troas and then arrives in Philippi on this highway, which is a Roman colony and capital. He begins to engage in ministry, eventually under persecution and arrest. Now this church gets planted whom he allowed to partner with him.

For the past few weeks we have been focusing on world missions. We actually focus on missions all the time here but we bring a particular focus as we invite some of our missionary staff and family here to renew our commitment to be engaged in Gospel partnership. This year our theme for world missions is to be fellow workers with the Truth. We ought to support such people in a manner worthy of the Lord so that we might be fellow workers, partners in the Gospel enterprise of taking the truth of salvation by grace through Christ to all the nations of the world. When we send such people on in a manner worthy of the Lord then we actually become fellow works with them.

A few weeks ago I gave you a case study on what it looks like when you have Gospel synergy. We looked at a key church in the book of Acts which was the church at Antioch. The church at Antioch existed because the church at Jerusalem sent people on three different occasions to help plant this church. The leaders at the church at Antioch had five pastors, five elders, five leaders and none of them were from Antioch. In other words, their leadership had been received by God's Providence sending them there but not only is Antioch a church because others had been sent and received but then Antioch becomes a sending church by sending out their two best pastors. That is the founding pastor Barnabas and his associate Saul who would later become Paul. The result is the first missionary journey and then the result is a second missionary journey. On the second missionary journey Paul gets the Macedonian call and now we get the church at Philippi as Paul heeds the call.

Philippi is a receiving church of what Antioch has sent to them and then Philippi becomes a sending church by supporting Paul and his missionary endeavors from the beginning all the way to the time he is now in prison in Rome. Do you see how this works? This is all working together as the body of Christ. A local church is the manifestation of the body of Christ but it's not the body of Christ. All the gifts of the Spirit of God are not in any one local church but God allows us to participate with other believers in other churches of like precious faith to get the Great Commission fulfilled and equip people to live the Great Commandment. This is called Gospel partnership where we're working together in the Gospel.

We are all missionaries even as we send missionaries out into the world. Wherever we are planted is our mission field. Some get sent cross culturally but we are missionaries here, but part of us not going cross culturally partner with those who go there by getting them there. So the question is how do you work/partner with those whom you send in a manner worthy of the Lord to get this done?

I confess I'm not the sharpest knife in the tray but I just think you go back to the Bible. Not a few weeks after Paul gets to Europe and many of us know Christ from our European ancestry, because Paul went there. The Gospel spread through Europe, Asia, South America, India, Africa and it began to reverberate like a Gospel earthquake with Gospel tsunami waves throughout the world. Even weeks after they land in Europe where Paul starts in Neopolis, Troas and Philippi, as they get to Thessalonica an adversary will say 'these people have turned the world upside down' (Acts 17:6). The power of the Gospel turns the world upside down and this is because of the Holy Spirit working through His people and I love looking in the Bible to see how they turn the world upside down.

I have a mission that has been given to me in the Bible. I find it in Matthew 28:16–20, Acts 1:4–9, Colossians 1:15–18, Ephesians 4:11–16 and woven all throughout the Scriptures. The mission we have is to make disciples of all the nations and the message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that then leads a person into the whole counsel of God so that there is breadth, depth, height and width in the lives of God's people and His churches. I know all that is true – on mission, on message and I love the fact to be in ministry so to show you what it means to be in ministry I can do no better than the Apostle Paul.

Paul always did four things. He did Gospel evangelism and discipleship. He did Gospel church planting or church revitalization (church strengthening). He did Gospel deeds of love, mercy and justice and he did Gospel leadership development, deployment, multiplication and mobilization. He knew the culture needed changing but he didn't go change cultures. He presented the Gospel which changed people and when people get the whole counsel of God all of their relationships, businesses and cultures change as a result of the church being on mission, on message and in ministry.

So that is what we do here and we're somewhere between zero and hundred percent effective and that's what they do out there. If they don't do that then we don't support them. They go to be on mission, on message and in ministry. I thank God for our mission's committee that supports them, stays with them and continually makes sure that we all together stay on mission, on message and in ministry – ministry of up reach, out reach, in reach and down reach. From the moment the church at Philippi was planted they became a supporting church, a partner church with Paul. So how did they do it?

Paul tells us so I'm going to read, outline it and then give you a chance to respond to it. Let's look at Philippians 4. This is such a glorious epistle. Philippians 4:4–7 says *[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Paul knows we live in a broken world and that concern, anxiety and worry is around us all the time. I want to qualify what he is saying when he tells us not to be anxious about anything. Paul also says he has concerns about the church so Paul is not ruling out in a broken world that we have concerns about our family, friends, ministry and all kinds of things. We have concerns and the Bible tells us how to address them. The first thing but not the only thing, it says for us to do so that these concerns don't become fears that paralyze us or anxieties that misdirect us is for us to know our theology. Our theology is that our great God is near. He is with you, around you and in you. Now He has opened up the way for you to pray so call upon Him for He is near.

A song we used to sing when I was a youth pastor said He is only a pray away. The throne of grace is opened up to you and His Spirit is within you. The blessings of God have been secured for you in a broken world so *in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God*. Notice that Paul is not deifying prayer but he is giving you the majesty of Christ who is accessed by prayer. Prayer is the means of grace. Jesus is the fountain of grace. Jesus is the One who calms the troubled soul, gives direction and upholds you. So you call upon Him and then instead of anxiety is reasonableness, gentleness and confidence in the Lord. The text says that the result is Jesus Himself stands guard over your heart.

After Paul tells the Philippians about intercessory prayer, giving them the clue as to why he can go from prison to prison for the reason he is not anxious is because of the Lord and that he can call upon the Lord at any time in prayer. Let's continue in the text.

Philippians 4:8–17 says [8] *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. [9] What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

[10] *I rejoiced in the Lord (not in prayer) 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.*

[14] *Yet it was kind of you to share (partnership) my trouble. [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.*

Our engagement in the Gospel in a manner worthy of the Lord honors the Lord and the Lord will be a debtor to no man. The Lord then blesses those who bless His Name. I'm not talking about the believe it and receive it stuff. I'm talking about when you give the Lord blesses you in your walk/life with Him and the anticipation of glory. You are actually laying up treasures in heaven that you can use for worship material when you get to heaven to give praise to Him. This is how Paul gives us this picture where he isn't putting this into his account for he says when they support him it's going into their account before the Lord. Let's continue in the text.

Philippians 4:18–20 says [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.*

Faith promise ministry is worship, a fragrant offering to the Lord. Paul outlines for us how we get into partnership right in this text. There are three things for us to do. One is we are to be personally engaged. Two we are to be prayerfully engaged and thirdly we provide provisions by giving. Notice that Paul calls the Philippians to intercessory prayer and he prays for them. Paul doesn't say 'I'm the missionary so you pray for me' yet Paul the missionary is

praying for them. Then he teaches them about how to pray and they can pray for him. They can pray for the mission, the message, the ministry and the missionaries.

Then they are personally engaged for they even sent Epaphroditus with a short terms missions team to bring their gift. Paul calls Epaphroditus and the gift a fragrant offering to the Lord as they personally engage with him. Then they give the gifts, the provisions.

I remember hearing a Baptist preacher say 'You can tell everybody that the river of life is free,' Amen? Amen! But then he continued saying 'but the plumbing costs.' It will cost people their life. It is going to cost time to pray. It's going to cost time to be personally engaged. It's going to cost provisions but I can't think of a better use of any of it than to get a Gospel of the Kingdom to the kingdoms of this world that men and women from every tribe and nation could be brought to Christ.

We will take some time at the end to commit ourselves to giving to world missions. I want you to think how you can be engaged personally. I just had the privilege to meet with some of our younger communities and to see all of what the Lord is doing there. I praise the Lord for all He is doing in their life. I mentioned to them in particular how this would be a good time for them to come under the mentorship of some of the older people in this congregation. We have had 55 missions conference and we have some people who have been in this church for all 55 of them who have some great wisdom. For couples this is a great way to do ministry together by being on that Global mission's team and see what the Lord is doing. What a great way to get involved personally.

We have missionaries all over the world and all around you. How can we know them and be engaged with them? It takes people to know people to take the Gospel to people who need the Lord and we are engaged with people. Perhaps the Lord is leading you to focus in on one or two of these missionaries in particular or one area personally.

You are either a missionary or a mission field. So if you're saved then you're a missionary – a sent one. Perhaps you're a home missionary but maybe God is beginning to awaken you to be a cross cultural missionary. Please don't think if you become a missionary you will become an evangelist for you have to be an evangelist here to be an evangelist over there. If you'd like to explore this in your life let our mission's team know so you can personally be engaged.

When we work through these things there is a Macedonian call now to take the Gospel to the world and we don't want to miss it. What about your prayer support? If nothing else pray for a missionary every Sunday you come to worship. We use flags in our church to show the countries that we have missionaries in. We don't use flags for political reasons. So if you see a flag of a certain country pray for that country and the missionaries in that country. These are nations we are taking the Gospel to. Develop a strategic ministry of intercessory prayer for world evangelism.

What about your faith promise? Get started in this. Don't wait. I was raised in a church that had missions every year but at that time I wanted no part of it. Then I became a Christian and I knew I needed to be a part of it in some way. In 1972 my wife and I started tithing although my wife had been tithing most of her life but I got in on tithing. So I told her I wanted to do a faith promise commitment and she asked me how much. I said '25 cents.' If you could see where I was in life in 1972, then you would know that 25 cents for me was a big commitment. This was beyond the tithe. What do you believe God is going to give you and if the Lord gets it to you, you promise it will get through you?

This is the way it works – faith, what do I anticipate the Lord is going to get to me? My wife and I think of this systematically. What can we do regularly? Sacrificially what are we going to do this year that we're not going to do but give it to missions? Then supernaturally, if God can cause Egyptians to throw gold and silver into the wagons of the Israelites as they are leaving Egypt then how is God going to plunder the Egyptians to throw some gold to us and when He gets it to us it's not for our living standard but it's to get to us to get through us. That's our faith promise. I'm not going to tell you what my wife and I give now but God has raised the ante from that 25 cents long ago. I am grateful for that October day in 1972 when we got started in giving this way. What is God doing in you that moves you to get started – personally and prayerfully?

After WWII General Douglas MacArthur was over the rebuilding of Japan and Marshall was put over Europe. MacArthur looked at the emptiness of Japan. Today I think barely over one percent are Christians but when MacArthur was there he saw how the Shinto religion was decimated. Emperor worship was eradicated. There was such dismay, depression and discouragement. He saw the emptiness of those who had worshipped their military and said "Now is the time" and he wrote back and asked for 10,000 missionaries and 10 million Bibles. He got approximately 200 missionaries and about 1,000 Bibles. Some have said that was MacArthur being used of the Lord for a Macedonian call to Japan, but we didn't answer. We were too busy with our own lives. Thus one percent today.

I believe in the Muslim world and throughout the world and in my own nation that there is an emptiness so every day when we gather to worship and the benediction is given, you scatter to share the Gospel as a missionary the next six days. Then let's work with those whom God is calling to send throughout the world – personally, prayerfully and with provisions that God has gotten to us that He gets through us that then is sent to plant churches to evangelism and discipleship throughout the world.

Take the next few moments to pray about what God would have you do personally, prayerfully and provisionally for world missions. Pray that God will multiply it and use it. Remember the boy with the two fishes and five loaves? When he went home do you think he said to his mother 'Can you believe that they took all my fishes and loaves?!' I don't think so. When he went home I think he said 'Mother, you won't believe what God did with my fishes and loaves!'

I think it's interesting when we hear the account of how much our congregation has pledged to world missions because a figure will be something like \$1, 258, 068.17. That is our churches way of saying that some children in our congregation have already gotten the idea which is typically where the 17 cents comes in and we see our families who are committed to world missions. Pray over yours. What is God leading you to do? Maybe He is leading you to change it? Maybe God is leading you to fill one out? People need the Lord and we have people to go to them. So let's send them in a manner worthy and partner with them. Let's pray over it.

Prayer:

Father, we bring these commitments with confidence in You, because we commit these missionaries to You. That just as the Apostle Paul knew how to live whether abounding or abase, may they also live with confidence in Christ. And thank You that in the challenges they face, we can partner with them. Thank you that we can personally, prayerfully, and financially give so they can go. And when they go, we get to go with them. Pray that You would bless them. Some of them are scratching in the soil that is hard, some of them are in revival cultures, but

God, our confidence is in You, and the power of the Gospel, and the power of the Holy Spirit. And God, I pray for these who are here—may we be faithful missionaries, telling people they need to be born again, they need to know Christ in Whom there is everlasting life. And thank you that we can not only tell people here, but tell people around the world by partnering with these who are going out. Help us to be faithful in prayer, personally engaged, and help us to bring that which You bring to us for the purpose of world evangelism. To see it, and to see what it does around the world, because You are the one that's doing it. And I ask You this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

#### Power Point

Fellow Workers for the Truth

Paul and the Church at Philippi

- Gospel Partnership – Personal
- Gospel Partnership – Prayer
- Gospel Partnership – Provision

#### LIFE TAKEAWAY

*Pastoral thoughts on Gospel partnership and our Faith Promise*