

Philippians 12 - Partners in Missions

We are at the end of the book of Philippians. Chapter 4, vs. 10-20 are a wonderful way to close out the book. Essentially, Philippians closes with a statement about missions. We try to emphasize here at church how job number one is getting out the gospel. But, just as Jesus said before ascending to heaven, our mission starts with soul winning in our Jerusalem and extends to preaching the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

One of the great hallmarks of the kind of Baptist churches that we descend from has been an emphasis on missions. Earlier churches before us began to compromise in the way they managed missions. The kind of churches that *we* have come from reacted to that and were built on fundamentalist doctrine and a soul winning evangelistic zeal. They were also extremely strong in their missionary outreach. Back in Bible college, it was popular for students to form missionary prayer bands which prayed regularly for missionaries. This was especially important because many students were trying to find God's will about their Christian service. The reason I, myself, stepped up Spanish ministry was because I was challenged in chapel about surrendering to God's will no matter what it was, even if it was to be a missionary. I suppose I ended up somewhere in between being a pastor and a missionary that way. We need to make sure that we give a proper emphasis to missions. Our people have always been very generous to visiting missionaries. We should be mindful to be concerned for our missionaries as part of our church because indeed they are an extension of our church.

Paul had just spent several chapters dealing with humility in unity. Just before vs. 10-20, he also spoke of a proper positive mindset for ministry. Now what we see in vs. 10-20 is that Paul's attitude is consistent with what he has preached up to this point.

Phil 4:10-20 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

14Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

19But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1. The character of a missionary -

Paul opens with an expression of gratitude for the financial support he was receiving from the Philippians. He will come back to that in a few verses but first he manifests the kind of humility that is necessary for ministry and especially for a missionary.

Phil 4:11,12 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Before a missionary can proceed, he has to be set in his heart to be content with wherever the missionary journey takes him. A missionary deals with many churches which support him. Then, when he gets to the mission field, he can only receive funding from the churches back home. Sometimes he experiences a church having to drop their support while they are on the field. It takes a great deal of humility to discipline oneself to depend on others.

In 1912 William Borden, a graduate of Yale University, left one of America's greatest family fortunes to be a missionary to China. He got as far as Egypt and died of cerebral meningitis. He died – and was only in his 20s – but there was "no reserve, no retreat, no regrets" in his consecration to God.

– Source Unknown

2. The strength of a missionary -

Phil 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Being humble, Paul knew that the source of his strength had to come from

God. However, he didn't merely attribute his strength to *knowing* Christ, but by *serving* Him. I suppose that because we major on learning the Word of God, church can become more like a school. Everything we do here, though, is geared to training people for serving God. Perhaps we should change our name to Peoples Baptist Church/Christian Training Center. Our spiritual strength comes from serving God. The very process of preparing to go to the mission field, arriving on the field, and reaching out to a people who know nothing about the God of the Bible will certainly spiritually exercise *anyone*. Missionaries have been known to wear out like any other human being, but many have accomplished herculean tasks during their time on the field.

At the age of 25, Adoniram Judson was the first American missionary to Burma. He and Ann married two weeks before they boarded a ship bound for India, from which they eventually were able to make their way to Burma. Judson would spend the next nearly forty years of his life living among and witnessing to the Burmese people. Until her death, Ann was the friend of many and even more fluent in the Burmese language than her academically inclined husband. Judson's efforts were slow-going. He was imprisoned and tortured, but he never gave up on his God-given calling to reach Burma for Christ. Before his death, Adoniram Judson had not only established several churches in Burma, but he had also given Burma one of the greatest gifts: the Bible in their own language.

For 51 years, J. Hudson Taylor poured his life into bringing Christ behind the closed doors of China. He founded China Inland Mission, and as a result, more than 800 missionaries were

brought into the country. Hudson Taylor was a prayer warrior and a faith giant. He was able to speak several Chinese dialects and helped to translate the new testament into the dialect used in Shanghai, where he spent many years of his life. Unlike many European missionaries, Taylor was careful of Chinese culture, respecting their way of life and even adopting their clothing. He faced sickness and loss with a spirit of unshaken trust, leaving behind a legacy that has inspired thousands of missionaries in all corners of the world. In his own words, "All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them."

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<https://kindredgrace.com/missionary-heroes-stories/>

3. The support of a missionary -

Phil 4:14-16,19 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Just as a church depends on God's people, so also does a missionary. There is no headquarters that takes care of the expenses of this church. There are no properties from which rent is collected. There is no retail outlet that the church operates. There are no appeals made in the media to ask strangers to provide for the church. Everything is taken care of

by the members of the local church.

Since missionaries depend on churches, they also depend on people supplying their need. It would be simple to suggest that they just go on faith. Missionaries do go on faith, faith in God that He will bless His people to send them. In these three verses, Paul commended the Philippians for their faithful support. They did not respond to just an emergency need, but gave a number of times to sustain his missionary work. We operate by that same pattern today.

You will notice on your offering envelope that there are several areas where you can specify a donation. The first obligation we have is to the local church so that we can continue as a base for missionaries to go out.

Mal 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

The tithe, which means 10 percent, is something that God has commanded us to do. As the needs of the church are taken care of, there is a space on the envelope to add on an offering for missions. A number of us come from a time in the church where we decided to support missionaries and we learned to trust God to provide according to Mal 3:10. The amount we each give to missions is not given by command, but by faith. I can tell you what the tithe is, but each of us must pray and give to missions by faith. Because the missions amount is done by each one's decision, we honor that decision and what is *given for missions goes to missions*. To do otherwise would require special circumstances decided by the entire church. Someone could make the mistake of simply determining an amount they think is good for God and then split it up between various causes.

We first give by God's command and then we give according to how we grow in faith as we see God provide. That is why vs. 19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." We have to be careful not to be identified with what has been called the "prosperity Gospel" where some assume that if they give God is then obliged to make them wealthy. Sometimes we give sacrificially just because it is good to do. We have to be careful in all of this. One's giving should never be something that is turned against someone as a criticism of his faith or spirituality. We *should* be challenged to increase our faith and then move as God directs.

You might remember how Moses sent Joshua out to fight the Amalekites. The same rod he used when he faced Pharoah, Moses now lifted up as he watched over the battle. As he lifted the rod, Joshua prevailed. When his arms grew weary, Amalek prevailed. Aaron and Hur took notice of this and sat Moses on a rock. They then stood by his sides and held his arms up.

Exod 17:10-12 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

11And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

12But Moses' hands *were* heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

We are Aaron and Hur to the missionaries we support. In recent times, we have truly been faithful to the going down of the sun, for the sun has set on several of our missionaries. This year, Chris Woodley, missionary to the deaf in

the Philippines passed away after struggling for a long time with health issues. Just recently, we received word that Marilee Barker has finally followed her husband into glory having served the Lord into her 90s.

4. Partners in ministry -

In Phil 4:17,18, Paul points out a very special principle. While some are discouraged by unwise financial practices, or even improper financial practices, we have to face the fact that depending on government is worse. The world is not going to deliver the Gospel, only the church is. The principle is this: we get to be part of God's work *through the missionary*.

Phil 4:17,18 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Paul explicitly points out that their giving was not about *them* supporting *his* work, but *him* supporting *their* work. As a church, we are charged with going out with the Gospel to the ends of the earth. We *personally* are not not equipped to go out to the ends of the earth. But along comes the missionary and says, "I will help you fulfill your calling." That is why Paul says that the fruit of his labors abounds to *their* account. We are partners in ministry. As Paul told the Corinthians,

1Cor 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

Each person has a part in God's work and all of the work works together to deliver the Gospel, first at Jerusalem and finally to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Finally, we want to remember that each of us are the fruit of those who had a missionary mindset. We often think of missions as occurring somewhere "over there." But someone had to be sent to start a church which then started a church which then sent a preacher who either talked to you or trained someone to talk to you about the Gospel. God has preserved His work and His Word through thousands of years so you could hear how to know Him. If you do not turn to Christ to receive His gift of salvation, it won't be because God didn't make a way for you. Jesus died to take all of your sin – past, present, and future. He died to remove the threat of Hell. God is so righteous that we cannot stand before Him. Jesus gave us standing so that now, baptized and joined to His church, we can serve in the joy of His work.

For those who do know Christ, we are challenged to step up in our faith to increase your giving to support the missionaries of this church. But, your challenge is to not skip your work here, at home. We need to be faithful in the work here or else there will be no church here to support the missions work "over there."

Acts 1:8, Phil 4:10-20,

1. The character of a missionary - Phil 4:11,12
2. The strength of a missionary - Phil 4:13
3. The support of a missionary - Phil 4:14-16,19, Mal 3:10, Exod 17:10-12
4. Partners in ministry - Phil 4:17,18, 1Cor 3:6