

A MISSIONS MINDED CHURCH

Philippians 1:18-20; 2:25-30; 4:15-19

November 30, 2008 Sunday, a.m.

INTRODUCTION

- A. I don't know its origin, who might have first used it, but it's a phrase that churches wear as a badge of honor. One of the greatest compliments a church can be paid is to hear someone say, "*That's a missions-minded church*" or "*our church is missions-minded.*"
- B. Why is that the reputation of some churches? I think it may have begun with the church at Philippi. They enjoyed a unique, personal, loving relationship with the Apostle Paul. Of all the churches he wrote to and had to scold for some unchristian practice or attitude, Paul had nothing but good to say about the church at Philippi. Why? Perhaps because they were mission-minded. What characteristics did they possess as a church to make them this way? Is it possible for our church to become mission-minded too? What is a missions-minded church?

I. FIRST, A MISSIONS-MINDED CHURCH PRAYS FOR MISSIONS AND MISSIONARIES (PHILIPPIANS 1:18-20).

- A. Paul's constant need and request was for the prayers of his fellow Christians (Philippians 1:18-20).
 - 1. At the moment he wrote to the Philippians, he was in jail for being a missionary.
 - 2. Paul's strength to endure came in large part from the prayers of God's people.
- B. More than anything else, even more than money, our missionaries need our prayers. There are at least two barriers, however, that we must overcome if we are to pray anything other than a general request for God to bless all the missionaries.
 - 1. The first barrier we must overcome in praying for missions and missionaries is a lack of information. Since we know very little about most mission fields, we do not know what to pray for. There are, however, a few concerns that are common with all missionaries.
 - a. First, pray for their personal fellowship with the Lord. Missionaries are not super Christians. They are people just like you and me. Consequently they experience spiritual shallowness, dryness, and emptiness just like the rest of us.
 - b. Second, pray for their work. Doing missions is usually tough work, with little response. We need to pray for our missionaries not to get discouraged in the face of an overwhelming task.
 - c. Third, pray for their families.
 - i. Their children grow up in another culture. Therefore, some never feel at home in the United States. Some decide to stay on the mission field even after their parents retire and move back to the states. Many families are separated when children must attend schools away from home.
 - ii. Pray for their parents, too. They miss not only their own children, but their grandchildren too. When it comes time for aging parents to be cared for, missionaries experience the stress of being thousands of miles away.
 - iii. Christmas, a happy time for most of us, often brings heartache to missionaries who are separated from family and friends.
 - 2. The second barrier we must overcome in praying for missionaries is spiritual opposition. This opposition comes from two sources.
 - a. One source of opposition comes from without, from Satan. He knows the power of our prayers and therefore tries to distract us and keep us too busy to pray for missions.

- b. Another source of opposition comes from within. We often avoid becoming too enthusiastic on praying for missions because we fear that God will call us to the mission field too. It does happen (Matthew 9:37-38; 10:1, 5). Jesus sent out some of the very ones who prayed for missions. The only answer you need is to know that God can be trusted with you and your family and that God's will, whether here in the States or on a remote mission field, is always good and best.

II. SECOND, A MISSIONS-MINDED CHURCH NOT ONLY PRAYS FOR MISSIONARIES, IT ALSO SENDS OTHERS TO HELP (PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30).

- A. Some help cannot be given by prayer and money alone. Sometimes someone has to go and help with the work. This means that someone must send them. That someone is a missions-minded church.
- B. Some people, like Paul, go for life. These are career missionaries.
- C. Others, however, like Epaphroditus go as short term missionaries (Philippians 2:25-30). Being a missionary was not his career. What can a person do as a short term missionary?
 1. Volunteer for two weeks to help build a chapel.
 2. Participate in an evangelistic crusade.
 3. Help dig a well or work in a medical clinic.
 4. Some get bitten by the missions bug and are no longer satisfied with just staying at home.
 5. Most short term volunteers return home with a new zeal and passion for missions, becoming cheerleaders for missions and missionaries.

III. THIRD, A MISSIONS-MINDED CHURCH FINANCIALLY SUPPORTS MISSIONS AND MISSIONARIES (PHILIPPIANS 4:15-19).

- A. Without financial support, missionaries cannot go (Philippians 4:15-19).
- B. When you give through the Cooperative Program or through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering you are providing the support needed to plant churches, build centers for caring for abandoned children, put gasoline in missionaries' cars, and provide for their medical care.
- C. That gift will also do something for you (Philippians 4:17).
- D. How much should you give? Since Christmas is a celebration of Jesus' birth, we can look at our missions' offering as His birthday gift. How much should you spend on Jesus? A good rule of thumb might be as much as you spend on your immediate family members' Christmas gifts.

CONCLUSION

- A. Are we really a missions-minded church or do we just like to wear the badge?
- B. We can be missions-minded if we...
 1. Pray for our missionaries.
 2. Send help to our missionaries.
 3. Financially support our missionaries.