

The Principles of Missions

By Paris Reidhead*

A missionary conference should have clear principles that you carry away. You're going to forget a great deal of what's been said, much of what you've seen, but there should be certain principles that are going to stay with you as long as you live. I assume that you've heard them. If you haven't put them together as I will in the next few moments, then this is going to help summarize them for you.

The first principle is this: *The Bible is a missionary book*. There are many who name the name of Christ who think the Bible has something to say about missions. That's totally incorrect. The Bible is a missionary book. Oh, it talks about agriculture, but it's not a book on agriculture. It talks about money, but it's not a book on economics. It's a missionary book. It unfolds the eternal purpose in the heart of God to bring to Himself a people that should be the objects of His love, a people for His praise, that should show forth His glory and grace, a people to whom He could reveal Himself and share all that He is.

It begins when the Earth, world was made, and it continues until there's a new heaven and there's a new Earth, and in between it's that unfolding of the eternal missionary purpose in the heart and plan and mind of God. If you read the Bible that way, then you're going to expect to see something relating to this task that's ours now at the end of the age on almost every chapter and every page.

The second principle is close to the first. It's this: *The church, rightly understood, is a missionary society*. Now, many churches have missionary societies. I have no objection to that as long as the church is a missionary society, but if it thinks it can have one in place of being one, it's out of order. The church is a missionary society. We have a great many missionary agencies that have called themselves missionary societies. If they think that they were raised up of God to send the missionaries, then they have misunderstood their role and function. The fact of the matter is missions as we know it began back there in Antioch when the Holy Spirit said to the brethren in the church there, "Separate unto me Saul and Barnabas and send them." (Acts 13:2b) Thus the church was constituted the sending agency.

What about these other agencies we call mission societies? Do they have a place? Of course they do. It would be very difficult for the pastor of church to have to arrange for all the visas, all of the problems that are associated with their people going into various countries, and so missionary service agencies that aid the local church, but it's the local church that's the sending entity and responsible before God to get the message out to the ends of the Earth, not some society.

The third principle ties closely to the other two. It's this: Everyone born into the family of God who has been washed therefore by the blood of Christ, who has truly repented of his sins and in that new heart has purpose to please God in everything, *I say every child of God is involved in this missionary task*. There is no room for spectators. The only one in a church that would be a spectator to the mission, to missions, is the one that has never been born again but somehow has come in under false pretense and colors into the membership of the church but still dead in their sins.

You see, dear friend, it is correct to say, as Oswald Smith said, "All around this country and Canada, if you are not a missionary, then you are a mission field." I believe that we need to reemphasize that. If you have been born of God, you are already by virtue of the call that He gave you. Oh, I know we hear a lot about people being called to missions, and I realize I've used the term, and I realize that it's not done with presumption, that what we really should say is we believe the Lord is lead us to missions, to a field. He's leading, He's directing, rather than calling. I'd like to reserve that word, "call," to the one that the scripture teaches. We have had a call, but it's from the Lord Jesus Christ: "Come follow me." (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17) It's a call to a person.

Someone's asked me after we had not returned to Africa but had remained home to do deputation work at the request of our society and the leading of the Lord, he said, "I thought you were called to Africa." I had to reply, "No, you thought incorrectly. I was called to follow Jesus Christ, and I'm going to spend my life following Him, doing what I believe He wants me to do, where and when and as He wishes and as He directs." He led us to Africa, and now He's led us home, and we're responsible for this

phase of His work. After all, the world is the field, and from the point of vision He has when He sees it, He sees it all at once, and it's very hard to distinguish home and foreign when you're looking at it from the throne in heaven.

Now every one of us are involved. You are involved in this task, and if you'll accept that responsibility and realize that, this conference when it's over has really just begun, because you are going to be engaged in your missionary responsibility. Some will go back to fields overseas, but your field is the home where you live, the community where you live, the school that you attend, the place where you work and earn your living. All of this is your mission field. The city where you live, the county, the state, the country, it's all part of your place of witness, your mission field.

You'll have to have Scripture to reinforce this, and therefore I submit to you that in Romans, the 4th chapter, we have a very clear statement by the Apostle Paul that I don't think I'm having to twist at all when I apply it to you and say that it reinforces this matter. Paul is talking about Abraham, and he's talking about the promise that God made to Abraham, and he is talking about the fact the seed of Abraham is not only those that are the physical descendants of Abraham, but also the ones that are his spiritual descendants, that Abraham by faith became the child of God and the father of the faithful.

He said, "All of you that who by faith have received Jesus Christ and have passed from death to life, you're the children of Abraham as well as those that are the physical descendants, and the promise that God made to Abraham was not only to his physical seed," argues Paul, "but also to his spiritual seed." Well, what is that promise? It's this: "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the Earth be blessed." (Gen. 28:14) God promised to Abraham that he would have a worldwide blessing, and God promised Abraham a seed who would also bless the world. If you've been born of God, you're that seed and you have from God the promise that if you will walk in the way He has commanded you to walk and made it possible for you to walk, that you too can have a worldwide blessing and ministry for Him.

Now, it's absolutely consistent with what we have in that word that the Lord Jesus gave as He was leaving His disciples. Do you remember what He said? After that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you shall receive power and you shall be witnesses unto me either in Jerusalem or in Judea or in Samaria or unto the uttermost part of the Earth. Is that what He said? No. Not even the new versions will go that far. The only place you get that is from the reversed vision, no-revised version, whatever. He did not say, "either/or." He said, "You shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the world." It's a "both/and" situation, not an "either/or" situation. Everyone who names the name of Christ filled with the Spirit of God has a worldwide ministry for Christ.

You say, "Well, that's some new doctrine, is it?" No, it's no new doctrine. It's just that which has been taught. Marjorie and I heard that from Robertson McQuilkin, President of Columbia Bible College, who came up to Monterey, Massachusetts, the New England Keswick. When we were candidates there and he McQuilkin spent two hours telling us about Abraham and the promise made by God to Abraham and the promise to Abraham's seed. Something took hold of my heart and became a flame of fire in my heart, that somehow God in His grace is going to give to me an opportunity for a worldwide ministry for Christ.

I had the privilege of going to Bible school seven years after high school to get ready to go. There were others that didn't. I think of that woman I heard about years ago. Don't ask me to give you the documentation on this because it's somewhere, but I couldn't put my finger on it. I read it and it burned its way into my memory, and I'm giving it to you substantially as I read it or as it was given to me. In Edinburgh, Scotland, there was a dear woman, a maiden lady staying home to take care of her aging parents, who had a heart for God long before women went to the mission field. God had begun to burden her to pray, and she asked God if He would send her. He said, no, He wouldn't send her, but He would send some of hers. She never married. She didn't know what it meant, "hers."

One Saturday she was doing the family shopping. They didn't have refrigerators in those days. You bought on Saturday what you'd cook and use on the Lord's day, and so it was. They shopped every day. She had her little woven basket and was walking down the street toward the store to get the provisions she needed, and out of a narrow alley a young boy about eight or nine burst, bumped into her. She didn't lose her balance, but he did his. He fell down on the cobbles and lay there sobbing. She reached down and set him up and took her handkerchief and wiped his runny nose and weepy eyes and cleaned his face, got him quiet. She asked his name. "My name is Bobby, m'am." "Well, why are you running, Bobby?" He said, "Well, my father is

drunk again and he's been beating me and I broke away from him. I'm running because I don't want to be beat anymore by him. Every time my father gets a drink he beats me, and my mother too." She talked a little while and they walked down the street. She said, "Bobby," as she went past a church, "have you ever been in the church?" "No, no, m'am. I couldn't go there. These are all the clothes I've got, these rags I'm wearing. They wouldn't let anybody like me in there. I hold the horses sometimes for the folks that do go in, and I've heard the music when the windows were open in the summer, but I never could go in." "Would you like to?" "Oh, m'am, I'd like to so much." She said, "Bobby, next Saturday you meet me right here. I can't do it today, but next Saturday you meet me and I will buy you clothes and you can go with me to that church." The next Saturday he was there, and she bought him everything from shoes, stockings, underwear, little shirt, pants, everything he needed to go neatly into the church. For several Sundays he met her there dressed up and went with her. Then one Sunday he wasn't there. She looked for him. She looked for him for a week and didn't see him. Then she saw him and said, "Bobby, what happened?" "Oh, I'm so ashamed, m'am. My father saw my package. I'd been hiding it under the bed behind a pillow, and he found the pillow and he saw the package, and he took my clothes and he pawned them for a drink, and I don't have anything to go to church." She said, "Bobby, meet me here. I'll buy you clothes, but we'll keep them at my house and you can come there and bathe and dress and you can go to church with me."

Well, after a few months, he said, "You know, I've listened to the Word and I've asked Jesus to become my Lord and come into my heart." Then she continued to teach him, get him ready for school, because he'd had no education, to read, to write, prepared him for entrance, and then he was accepted. She paid his way. He went to seminary and he went to the mission field. Years have gone by. She's gone home to be with the Lord. He's in China, late at night. A couple of candles and saucers, a bare pine table, and a man, face prematurely lined seen kneeling on the floor with a packet of paper under his hands that he's dedicating to the Lord. It's the New Testament in the Chinese language, translated by Robert Morrison, first missionary to China, who was the wee Bobby of Edinburgh. And a maiden lady who could never leave Edinburgh was responsible for getting the Word of God into China.

What did He say? "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the Earth be blessed." How's He going to do it? Did He have a plan commensurate with such an enormous responsibility and privilege and task? You would expect our God to have such a plan, would you not? One that was logical and reasonable. There are those people who in their shortsightedness think that what the angel sang that night, that first Christmas night over the plain of Bethlehem, was, Thou shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from hell and take them to heaven when they die. That too is the reverse vision. That's not what the angel said. He said, "Thou shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21)

God's purpose in salvation is not just to keep us out of hell, but to save us from the penalty of what we have done, to save us from the tyranny of our own traits and dispositions, attitudes and habits, to save us from the power of temptation and provide a way of escape. Also to take these blood ransomed bodies and personalities as living sacrifices to be given to the Lord Jesus, just as Mother Mary gave her body to the Holy Ghost that He might be incarnate and come into time and invade time, that the one who'd inscribed the Decalogue on the tables of stone, the lawgiver, could by incarnation become a law-keeper so that He could die for law-breakers like me, like you.

He asks us to present our bodies a living sacrifice that He might live in us and live through us, His own life. If you look above you, you will see light bulbs twisted into sockets, and because those light bulbs are in the socket and are making connection with the energy that's flowing from a generator somewhere, those light bulbs have become incandescent and are dispelling the darkness that would be around you if they were not working. And so, His purpose and grace is that somehow He might bring us into such a relationship with Him that we could become incandescent with His presence.

In John chapter 17 and verse 20, He speaks of His disciples who are with Him, praying I do believe, and He says to His Father, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, that they all may be one, as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, they may be one in Us, that the world may know that Thou has sent me?" "And that the world may be able to believe." (John 17:21 reemphasized) Most of the world tonight, today, does not know that the Father sent the Son, and many of those who know that fact are not able to believe because they see no demonstration of the reality

of His presence, but in His prayer to His Father He said, "Father, that they all may be in union, the same way that I lived in You and You lived in Me, I may live in them and they will live in Me, and the world will know and the world will be able to believe."

The world doesn't know and it isn't able to believe. Why? I think it's because we've tried everything else but God's way. I don't want us to stop doing anything we're doing. I just want us to add to it the way the Lord Jesus saw that the task would be accomplished. My friend, if you've got insight enough and wisdom enough from God to know that you can't save yourself by your own efforts, it's not asking too much to expect you to realize that if you couldn't save yourself by your own efforts, you can't serve Him acceptably by your own efforts either, why everything I do and everything you do and the energy of our personalities is going to be burned up in the judgment, and in that day will be nothing but "wood, hay, and stubble." (I Cor. 3:12)

The only thing that's going to endure that test, that fire, will be that which He did through us, and what He is asking now is that you will recognize that if you couldn't save yourself, the only logical course for you is to present your body to Him a living sacrifice. The purpose is to please Him, if you're a child of God, in everything. He's Lord of everything. How is it going to be affected, how is it going to be fulfilled? When you come to that place that you realize, "I can't, Lord. I've tried, I can't," oh, my, what a wonderful thing to come to the realization that you can't. That's the first time that He can say, "Well, I've been waiting for you to come to that place. Now, if you'll give me a chance, you'll find out that whereas you can't, I can." What you can't do for Him, you'll find He can do through you, and there's all the difference in the world.

You'll have nothing but frustration and defeat and heartache and sadness if you try it in the energy of all what you are, but He says, "Present your body a living sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1) Present your brain so the Lord Jesus living in you can use your brain to think His thoughts and get them back in the world. Present your heart so that living in you He can have a heart that's moved with compassion. Present your eyes so that living in you He can use your eyes to see the lost. Present your ears so that He in you can listen to the cry of those caught in the toils of sin. Present your feet so that living in you He can use your feet to go where He wants to go. Present your hands so that living in you He can use your hands to lift the fallen and feed the hungry and guide the blind to light. Present your lips so that living in you He can speak through your lips, your mind, His word of redeeming love to those to whom He sends you to bring that message.

What did Paul say? "I, I'm crucified with Christ." (Gal. 2:20a) It took three years at the university of hard knocks for him to unlearn. He had to get a graduate course in unlearning. Three years, and all he's doing is making Bedouin tents. Everything, his credit cards have lapsed, all his memberships have lapsed, and everything is gone. He's sitting out there with a callous on his thumb pushing the needle through that goat's hair canvas, and the Lord says, "Well, are you ready, son?" "Ready, Lord? I've forgotten everything. I've forgotten how to talk. I've forgotten how to write. I've forgotten everything. Why, the things that I used to count gained to me, I count refuse, just fertilizer, nothing. I'm nothing, Lord."

You know what the Lord said? "Oh, that's fine. That's fine. You have nothing?" "No, I haven't anything. I can't do anything, Lord. I can't come to the excellency of men's speech. I used to be quite a debater, but I can't do that anymore. All I know is Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Now listen. "I," said the Apostle, "am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) He didn't say, "By faith in the Son of God," but, "Faith of the son of God." What was that? That someday you'd run down, someday you'd quit, and some day you'd say, "Lord, I can't," and then you'd hear Him say, "I know you can't. I know you can't, but I can. Now if you really mean that you can't, just present yourself to me and invite me to fill you with myself. Let me move in, take over, and control."

A lot of folks have been filled with the spirit and have never gotten around yet to letting the Lord Jesus Christ live His life through them. Oh, they're filled with the spirit, I don't have any question about that, but they've never recognized that the Lord Jesus wants to do the work through them. That's what we're talking about. What did He say of His ministry? "I do nothing of myself. The works that I do, the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. I don't speak of Myself. I speak as I receive commandment of the Father." If He hadn't done that, He never could have said that night of the resurrection in the upper

room ... You remember what He did. He came into the upper room and He said to his disciples, "Peace be unto you." (John 20:19) Then what did He say? "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you." (John 20:21)

That word, "send," the Latin form of the word send is "mitto," from which we get "missionary." Literally what He said was, "As the Father missionaried Me, so I missionary you." But how? Think about it for a moment. The Lord Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. From the moment of that conception He was in-dwelted by the fullness of the Godhead bodily. For 33 years He lived as a root out of a dry ground, "increasing in wisdom, stature, favor with God and man." (Luke 2:52) He went down to Jordan's banks and He was baptized.

Now, to us, baptism is a picture of death to sin and alive to God, but our Lord Jesus had no sin. To what could baptism apply? To what could it be symbolic? He was God come in the flesh, and He had a perfect right to do everything that was to be done in His own essential deity as Son, but there on Jordan's banks and in that water the Lord Jesus said, "I lay aside the right to act in my essential deity as Son and I accept the limitation of My humanity that in all things I may be like unto my brethren," and "the Spirit of God who was in Him at that moment came upon Him," clothing Him, and everything done by Christ from that moment was done by the power of the Father through the Holy Spirit and not by the son in His own essential deity. (Matt. 3:16)

Why? So that He could say that night and this morning, "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you." What's the parallel? You were born of the spirit. The spirit of God awakened you and convicted you and brought you to repentance, and when you savingly received Him, He came in to quicken your heart, and then you presented, you asked Him to come, and He clothed you with the Holy Spirit. You were baptized in the Holy Spirit, but have you learned to let the Lord Jesus Christ live His life through you the way Paul did when He said, "I'm crucified ..." He could have said, "I'm crucified with Christ, I'm buried with Him, quickened with Him, raised with Him, seated with Him, and Christ."

We've tried everything else. Don't you think it's time we did this His way? Oh, if this morning the company of people within these walls, about 12 times, 10 times at least more than there were in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, a task the Lord gave us could be completed if every one of us here would simply allow the Lord Jesus from this day on to live in us His own life and, through us, my, the things that would happen, the ministries that would be taking place, the work that would be done.

That's your privilege. You are an heir to the promise: "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations the Earth be blessed." It's to you that He says, "Present your body a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God," "which is your reasonable service." You're a missionary, "both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the Earth." You. You're right there in the center of it all. What are you going to do about it? What will you do about it? Will you leave, forget the sound of the voice that was in your ears for a few minutes, or will you do something about it? This missionary conference ought to totally change your life, not because I'm here or the other speakers are here, but because you have met with God and you've heard God speak to your heart, and you've said, "Lord, I want my life to count for Christ."

We were on our way back from Africa. Our ship, the SS Exochorda, that had gone from Alexandria, Egypt to Piraeus, Greece. We would be there taking on some cargo for two or three days, and so we arranged a trip to go down through Athens. The place we ended up, the last place we saw, was the Coliseum, where the original Olympic games had been held. Our guide, a limousine driver that had gotten this group from the ship, taking them, our guide had been a taxi driver in Chicago and he spoke inimitable English. We enjoyed it and him. He had some very interesting, wry, maybe untrue, but interesting comments about Athens, too. I don't know how much he knew about history, but he was an exciting guy.

We were standing there in this refurbished Coliseum. The Nazi's had done it when they'd occupied Greece. They'd gone and got the marble and fitted it out again. I said to the guide, "Where was the Bema?" "Oh," he said, "you speak Greek." I said, "No, I don't speak Greek." "You said Bema. That's Greek." "I know it's Greek." "Well, why do you say Bema?" "Because for many, many years I've been expecting to stand before the Bema." He said, "You can't. It isn't here anymore. When they remade this they didn't put the Bema in there." I said, "What was it?" "Well," he said, "it was a balcony where the judges sat and where they would bring the people that had won. They'd come up on some steps and judges at the Bema would give them a crown of laurel leaves." Could you imagine these fellows going out and getting killed or someone trying to kill them and all they get when they finish was laurel leaves?

It faded away and I had a vision. I don't know whether I was awake, whether I was asleep, whether I saw it or whether I imagined it, and I don't care. It was more real than anything that was around me. I saw a vast temple on a high hill, and then in a moment I was in a line of people going into great doors at that temple, and in another moment I was up to the door. A servant, probably an angel, reached over and brought a package and said, "Here, take this." I picked the package up. It wasn't large and it wasn't heavy. I carried it with me through the doors, and there I saw the Lamb seated upon the throne, more glorious than anything that ever been written or painted of Him. In that moment I knew what it was. I was to appear before Him. There in my hand was my life, and my works were going to be tried, whether good or bad, whether "wood, hay, or stubble, or gold, silver, precious stone." The line moved and I was next. A servant said, "Give me the package," and I did. There was a furnace there at the foot where the Lord was seated and a flame that burned with nothing to fuel it. My package was put in there and the flame covered it. A moment later the servant picked up a tool. I didn't see the tool till later. After, I heard it grating on the furnace, and then I heard the voice of the servant say, "Stretch out your hands." I reached out my hand to take a crown, and the voice said, "Cup your hands." A little shovel with a cover on it was put over my cupped hands, and the light contents from within slid out into my palms. When I brought it around in front of me and looked, all I had was a handful of ashes. Ashes. Oh, I'd served. I'd given my food to feed the poor, my money to help the ... I'd given my body to be burned. I'd been a missionary. I'd had the wrong motives, the wrong attitude, the wrong relationship, wrong resources. What I'd done, so much of what I'd done I'd done to be seen. I dropped my hands. I looked at the Lord and the look in His eye made me weep. I had nothing to give Him but my life. I knew that I would have wept perhaps for eternity. I was there, but my life had been wasted. I followed my filtering ashes down and I found I was standing on a carpet of ashes. He looked at me. He dried my tears by that look of tender love and forgiveness. I turned, and the next thing I heard was, "Mr. Hurry, hurry. They're waiting for you. What are you standing there for?" I walked out to the limousine, shocked. I suppose there have been very few days that I haven't thought about that and asked the Lord to help me so to live and to minister that in that day there will be something to lay at his nail-pierced feet, that it won't be just a handful of ashes, a wasted life and wasted time and opportunity and privilege and neglected truth.

You say you want a crown? What are you going to do? Strut around heaven with a crown? No. No. God has to take the strut out of you or you aren't going to make it to heaven. I found out what they do with crowns, and ever since then I want one, because I found that the 4 and 20 elders cast their crowns at His feet, and I want something with which to say, "Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul. Thank you, Lord, for making me whole. Thank you, Lord, for giving to me my great salvation, so full, so free."

Shall we pray? Father of Jesus, we're here today, the last service but one or two of this conference, this first annual missionary conference. The potential within this room for Thy cause, enormous. We can't calculate what it would be if everyone here would with Paul say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." We're asking that there will be serious business done with Thee today. Men and women who have played at Christian life will begin to realize what a marvelous privilege it is to be called the children of God, who played at Christian work and service will decide now is the time to get serious with the Lord.

Father, we pray for the young people who have their whole lives to give to Thee, the older people that have their experience, their judgment, their wisdom of the years to give to thee, to guide and help the young people. Lord, just the potential here is so enormous. Oh, how we ask that the lamb that was slayed might, through this congregation and this people, receive the reward for His suffering.

* Reference such as: Delivered at a Missionary Conference by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.