

The Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of Missions

David Vaughn | *Excerpt* | illbehonest.com

To prove that it is in the church's missionary activity that we most supremely see the traits of our Lord in the church, I want to paint you a picture with three brush strokes from church history. And now, I'm coming to wrap this up. I want to do this and then just say a word of application, but first, let's think of this. How do we see the Lord Jesus Christ, the beauty of the Lord in the church, in its missionary vision and burden and activity?

William Carey

The first brush stroke is the brushstroke of the extraordinary breadth of love. It's 1875. This man is trying to make ends meet. He has two jobs. He's a school teacher and he has another job also. We go into his home and he has a workshop. There's a few stools there. There's a cobbler's outfit. There's a Bible. There's another book. And there's a strange-looking map on the wall. And on that map, there's writing all over the place about each country and its spiritual situation. That man's name is William Carey and the map is on the wall because the map is already... the map is already in his heart because the Spirit is a missionary Spirit. And He is the Spirit of Calvary love.

His close friend Andrew Fuller writes this about him during time when he was a cobbler: "I knew Carey when he made shoes for the maintenance of his family. Yet even then..." he says, "his heart burned incessantly for the salvation of the heathen." It's just beautiful. "Even then," says Fuller, "he had drawn out a map of the world with sheets of paper pasted together besmeared with shoemaker's wax and the moral state of every nation depicted with his pen." "Carey's pupil," writes his biographer, "...saw sometimes a strange sight: their master moved to tears over a geography lesson. As pointing to continents, islands, and peoples he would cry, 'and these are pagans.'" Pagans.

Now, isn't there a mysterious, not-from-this-world power at work in a cobbler that he becomes like that? And is it not there that I see in a cobbler more than anywhere else the trace of the image and the beauty of my Lord who yearns over a lost world? Isn't it there that I see Jesus in William Carey more than anywhere else?

Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

The second brush stroke is the brushstroke of extraordinary depth of love – not just breadth of love like Carey with his maps, but depth of love. Well, we could take so many examples. We could take Brainerd. And you know he's praying in the snow. And he's spitting up blood because he's got tuberculosis. And he writes, "I had no notion of joy from this world. I cared not where or how I lived or what hardships I went through so that I could but gain souls for Christ." What mysterious power is this? Have I ever felt that to that depth? Have I ever said to my wife, "I care not where or how I live or what hardships we go through?" I wouldn't dare say that to her. But I want to give you another example of this.

Excuse me. I don't know if you know Jonathan Goforth. He was a Canadian Presbyterian missionary in China at the same time as the heyday of the China Inland Mission. His wife was a person of great, great commitment and spirituality. She wrote several books. You might want to check into her little quaint book called "How I Know God Answers Prayer." And God did an amazing work of revival through Jonathan Rosalind Goforth, particularly in Manchuria where the Spirit of God just fell upon village and town after town, so much so that some people thought that Jonathan Goforth had a power of hypnosis and said so. And they would refuse to come to the meetings because they would see people lined up – the Chinese lined up by dozens waiting to confess publicly murder and adultery and thievery, weeping over their sins as the power of God reached out and just took these people out of the darkness. But here's the story about the depth of love.

This is Rosalind's account of the incident during the Boxer Rebellion when the Empress of China had sent out the decree to kill all foreigners and many of the missionaries were killed. "My husband turned pale as he pointed to a group of several hundred men, fully armed awaiting us. They waited till all the carts had passed through the gate, then hurled down upon us a shower of stones, at the same time rushing forward and maiming or killing some of the animals. Mr. Goforth..." Isn't it quaint how you call your husband "Mr." at the time? But... "Mr. Goforth jumped down from our cart and cried to them, 'take everything but don't kill!' One man struck him ablow on the neck with a great sword wielded with two hands." Fortunately, it was the blunt end of the sword. "His thick helmet was cut almost to pieces, one blow cutting through the leather lining just over the temple." She talks about other blows. They begin to rain blows down upon him and she says, "Again, he was felled to the ground with a fearful sword cut which entered the bone of the skull behind and almost cleft it in two. Rising from this blow, he was again struck down by a club."

Now, you're watching your husband endure this. And a child gets lost in the mayhem of it all also for a day or so. "As we neared the village, men came out to drive us away, but I begged them to help us. By this time, Mr. Goforth had sunk to the ground. Putting the baby in an old woman's arms, I knelt down beside my husband. The children were crying bitterly. Mr. Goforth looked as if he were dying. And the women standing around us were weeping now. This was too much for the men who came forward and said, 'We will save you.'" Later that day or the next day, "when we reached the inn, a wild mob of over a thousand men filled the inn yard, and as we alighted from the cart, these men literally drove us before them into one room which in a few moments was packed to suffocation. For probably an hour, the crowd kept crushing us into one corner. Then those outside became impatient at not being able to get in and demanded that we be brought out to be killed. We stood facing that seething multitude until relief came in the darkness."

Now, in the next chapter of the book, listen to this. How would you react to all of this? "One of the results of our gracious and merciful deliverance..." because they were delivered as she lived to talk about it – "from the hands of the Boxers was an increased desire to make our lives tell in the service of God to spend and be spent for Him. After the Boxer experience, my husband returned to China in 1901, and with my children, I left for China in the summer of 1902. Mr. Goforth met me at (unintelligible) and unfolded to me a carefully thought out plan for future mission work. He felt that the time had come when we should give ourselves to the evangelization of the great regions north and northeast of

(unintelligible) – regions which up to that time had scarcely been touched by the Gospel because of lack of workers. What that proposition meant to me can scarcely be understood by those unfamiliar with China and Chinese life. Smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and other contagious diseases are chronic epidemics, and outside the parts ruled by foreigners, it's absolutely devoid of sanitation. Four of our children had died. To take the three little ones then with me into such conditions..." Well, this time (of weeping), it's just because of how little I feel that I've done. "...Into such conditions and danger seemed literally like stepping with them over a precipice in the dark." What depth of love! Is there not a mysterious power, a Spirit from elsewhere, this very Spirit of our Lord who endured such suffering that He might by all costs embrace a whole world and save men from every tribe and people?

Jay Oswald Sanders

The last brush stroke is shorter, but it's not about a missionary on the field. It's about a local church at home that sends and prays and gives. Well, let me say something about the pastor of this church. Jay Oswald Sanders was one of the greatest proponents of missions in the 20th century. As a young man, he was told that his physical constitution was not fit for missionary work. But he went anyway. First of all, he went to Latvia and Estonia. He fainted away and was brought back to North America. After some years of ministry in Canada, he went again. He went to Spain as a missionary. He had to come back again because of illness. In 1928, he founded the People's Church of Toronto. And four years later, he couldn't resist the missionary urge. The world was on his heart. So he went to Africa. He collapsed with a serious illness and was brought back to Canada. In 1938, he could not resist again and he went to the Pacific to the Solomon Islands as a missionary where he contracted malaria and was very ill on the mission field for three years until they carted him back. And so he might have been a bit obstinate, but now he concluded: I was not made to be a missionary. And so, he began to pastor that church he had founded, and it became one of the greatest missionary sending churches of the 20th century.

He says, "What a delight for me when I saw the first five men on the platform being sent out as missionaries." And when the five became ten, and the ten became twenty, and the twenty became fifty, and the fifty became a hundred, and the hundred became two hundred, and the two hundred became three hundred. And in his forty-year pastorate, that one local church sent out 350 missionaries.

Now listen, not Jay Oswald Sanders – you can't do that as one person. There is a church with the hand of God upon it that is sharing with that pastor a wonderful, beautiful missionary urge and burden and vision. And I would like to just take you with me to a service, okay? Now, the account is told by Fred Jarvis who was there. He was a missionary to Japan. But he gives this account. And let me just explain. The way this church did it – their missionary giving – was they had one day every year, and they would have just a day at the end of the missions convention where people would give and where they would make pledges for the next year. And this is what Jarvis says about that culminating day when everyone was going to make their pledges and their giving. He says – it's a big church... big. I think there are thousands. A couple thousand at least. "An immense crowd thronged every inch of space. Enthusiasm was running high. It was the fourth service of the day.

Some 9,000 people had attended. Hundreds were standing.” These people were excited about something. “As Dr. Smith mounted the platform, the audience awaited in breathless silence the announcement of the grand total, the missionary giving for that one year: \$225,000.” Now this is in the 1960’s. A crescendo of joyful praise gripped the vast assembly as the people united in singing the Hallelujah Chorus.”

What sort of mysterious power has grabbed ahold of these people that they would be so rejoicing that this is the biggest day of the year for them? That they are just overjoyed that this much money has been lost to them? That they’ve given it away to people they’ve never seen before to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? He goes on and he says, “over 50,000 had attended the three weeks of the convention. This was the first time in history that a missionary convention had been held for such a long period. There had been no begging for funds, no solicitors had been sent from door-to-door. It was God’s people – (at home, not on the field) – it was God’s people getting God’s vision and carrying out God’s program. It was giving to evangelize the world. It was a red-letter day in my experience,” says the missionary at home on furlough learning something about the Holy Spirit in the sending church.

Wow... what would you give to see your church even on a small level brought up by the power of the missionary Spirit – He was always the missionary Spirit – breathing into you and I that sort of redeeming love? And if you’ll just permit me a little speculation and I’m going to stop. Imagine that after that announcement of that amount – and I have to tell you that during the 40 years, that church gave million dollars in giving and 8 million was used for missions. But imagine, after the announcement and the Hallelujah Chorus, they join in singing, “O’er the gloomy hills of darkness; cheered by no celestial ray.” Think of the hundreds of them together rejoicing and thinking of the money given. “Son of righteousness arising, bring the Bride, the glorious day!” It’s beautiful, isn’t it? “Send the Gospel to the earth’s remotest grounds.” And there, I see something of the image – the very image and the beauty of my Lord in that sending church. And it is found in the missionary Spirit.

Application: Well, the good news is that the Holy Spirit is still in the business of doing that today. I think I’m just going to stop because I’ve preached too long. And I think the application is clear that we need to long for and pray and yearn after and talk about the Spirit of God being a missionary Spirit. Oh, breathe upon us, breath of God. Amen.

(unintelligible) I’m sorry. (from the room) Psalm 126:6. Psalm 126:6, I’m sorry. I don’t know it by heart, but I’ll read it. “He who goes out weeping bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy bringing his sheaves with him.” Amen.