

God's Glorious Mission Part 2

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The Character of those on Mission is demonstrated by people who are possessed by God.

The church has excelled in organization, administration, providing programs for every age and interest group. The church can entertain her members as good as the world can. The church has many times done very well in helping to meet the felt needs of the congregation and the community. We have excelled at preaching moral sermons, do this and God will be pleased and you will be blessed.

God had a plan for missions, the Cross of Calvary.

God has a priority for missions, the preaching of the cross.

God has a people of missions from all ethnics in His creation.

Our pursuit of missions begins with a passion to know the Lamb of glory, our great God and Savior, our Redeemer, of whom the 24 elders , the four beasts, and the multitude of Angels were heard by John the apostle saying, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen."

Revelation 7:12

The apostle Paul said it this way,

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; “Philippians 3:7-10.

The Character of the people is rooted in the person of Christ

It is people who pursue holiness.

There is no such thing as a carnal Christian. It is an oxymoron.

Every believer has been made holy and is as holy as they will ever be, but we are to strive to grow in the grace and knowledge and practical outworking of the holy people we are.

The simplest definition is different.

We have been made different from all other men even though we still share some common things.

We pursue holiness by growing in our dependence upon God’s grace.

His grace has provided all we need- He causes us to be holy and the enablement to live in holiness unto the glory of God.

We are assured of these things by clinging to the promises that are for us in Christ.

It is not about doing first, it is about trusting first knowing that the trust enables us to do and the Holy Spirit causes and empowers us to do.

Prayer based on God’s word, Increases trust in the promises of God, Confirms who we are in Christ and Motivates us by the Holy Spirit to act according to who we are in Christ

Sound doctrine leads to right living (regardless of our circumstances) which leads us to an increased hope because we know we are growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

It's not about measuring growth. It is ABOUT KNOWING THAT YOU LOVE CHRIST MORE. Any failure for the believer is not final because of grace. Failure is a means that causes us to be determined to love Christ more because we realize the greatness of forgiveness from God for our sin. We must learn that there was grace that saved us, grace that sustains us, grace that secures us now and future grace that keeps us forever. Failure is a means to find my sufficiency in Christ because He never fails. My failure is part of God's purpose where He will be more glorified because of His grace towards us. Failure for an incurable lover of Christ is not final.

Do not be afraid of failure because you will fail at times

Embrace it as a means to love Christ more

"He who began a good work in you (giving you a new heart) will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ".Phil.1:6

You cannot perfect your new heart - it is the work of God

What we do is live out the transformation that is increasing inwardly as we love Christ more. As we love Christ more we love our neighbors more therefore we are obeying Christ. We are growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ

If you love Christ and your neighbor as an incurable lover of Christ you will delight in glorifying God by revealing Jesus Christ

Your passion for Christ will intensify (a better word than grow)

Your Gospel message will be certain and clear because it will be rooted in the attributes of Christ.

What we are saying is that holiness is practical

What is Practical Holiness?(the outworking of the new heart, it is being who are made to be by the new birth.)

It is obedience to God's Word in the everyday life ie. loving Christ.

It is The fruit of the Holy Spirit.(Gods provision of holy character) His produce not ours and growth is guaranteed by the promise of the New Covenant.

It is genuine love for other people.

When we have this character we can apply it to any work that God has ordained for us.

Eph 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The work flows from the character, the character flows into the work"

Mt.5:13¶ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.16"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Jesus has come to establish and eventually consummate His kingdom.

Until the time of His return to consummate the kingdom, we as his disciples have been given teaching by our Savior on the norms of the Christian life as members of the kingdom, in the beatitudes, the first part of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus has taught about the progression that must be evident in the life of a true believer and disciple of Christ and the ongoing maturity that must be evidenced in some degree. If these things are not evident, then there is no true conversion or hope to be a member of the eternal kingdom of God as a son of God.

In the next part of Jesus' sermon we move from the norms of the kingdom to the Witness of the kingdom. All of what Jesus has previously taught is to prepare the church to be witnesses of the Kingdom.

The evidence of a true conversion that produces qualities of recognizing our sinfulness, hating sin and mourning over it, being willing to be made into what God wants us to be, hungering and desiring after God and His righteousness, being merciful, having a heart that is pure and wanting conformity with the will of God through the transformation of our minds/our hearts, being peacemakers and knowing that living like this will bring persecution in some way or form because we are truly not of this world.

How logical of Jesus to then instruct us that all of this is required because we are the witnesses of the kingdom of God. All of these norms of the Christian life are there for a very specific purpose and that is to be witnesses of the kingdom. These norms are what constitute being a witness for the kingdom of God which is a God glorifying enterprise. The teaching we have from Jesus is the believing church as witness. It is not enough to be a believer. There is a purpose that is clear for the believer and that is as a witness of and for the kingdom rooted in the purpose of glorifying our Father in heaven.

Meditate for a moment on how logical this is.

Jesus has already told us that when we live according to the norms of the kingdom we will attract attention even if it is only in the form of opposition. You cannot be a Christian under any normal circumstances and live in vacuum - you cannot live in some kind of monkish isolation and claim to be a Christian or try to make some foolish argument that you and God have differences or say some idiotic thing like "God and I have issues." No, God never has issues. And all we have is sin in disobedience. Don't tell me your friend or relative is a Christian when they have no desire for the Word of God, no desire to be with God's people, no desire to live according to the norms of the kingdom or have no desire to be a witness for the kingdom. That is a perfect picture of a godless person who does not know Christ by a supernatural rebirth from above that comes by God's grace and grace alone.

Anyone who would have the boldness to say that they are a Christian and have that kind of an attitude has suffered from a man made conversion not a God made one. God changes the heart and right understanding and reasoning follows, not perfectly but it follows and matures as we learn to trust and obey.

Jesus is proclaiming that we have a purpose in the world regardless of how our witness is received. We are here to leave a mark on the world. We are here to make a difference in this sinful, unholy, wicked and depraved world of sinners whether it is appreciated or not. In the end, all of the world is without Christ and is nothing but a heap of sin and all the results of sinners living in sin.

And yet, God puts good things in the midst of all of this even though it may be corrupted by sin. The beauty of His creation, music, art, poetry,

books that have value, and even lost people who even in their sin can seem to be nicer people than most Christians we know.

But we are to show mercy and be meek and be peacemakers not compromisers.

And so it is amazing to me that Jesus uses the metaphors of salt and light to describe what our witness is to be like.

The world is rotting and putrefying in sin, like meat left too long in the midday sun in the open market in Jerusalem. But when the proper salt is added to treat the meat, it delays the rotting process.

This is an incredible truth about why God has his kingdom people.

All foods are not enjoyed by everybody and they still have to be preserved, prepared, and served properly.

We are the salt of the earth Jesus says. We are the preservative for anything that may be good in this sin ridden world.

Everyplace place where there is a genuine normal Christian living as they should is a better place to some degree than if that person was not there.

So when entire villages of Christians are murdered and burned out, the place is worse than what it was regardless of the intolerance to the Christians. The place was a better place because they were there.

Wherever it is you work, it is a better place because of you. Your department, your office, your classroom, your assembly line would be a worse and more sinful place if you were not there. If you are living out the norms of the kingdom you are making a difference whether it is appreciated or not and sometimes it is appreciated.

People recognize something different about you and ask your opinion or see that you do not compromise on certain moral matters and they admit

to you that that they are morally indifferent and this gives you an opportunity to build a bridge to the gospel, whether it is received or not. But you by God's grace have made a difference.

They may appreciate your kinder words or gentler attitude if you are a supervisor or some other kind of authority in the workplace.

My wife counsels me at times and says, "it is not what you have said that is wrong but the tone of your voice that makes it unacceptable."

And so we are the salt of the earth and this is meant to keep us from compromise. It means we are here for a purpose and God cares enough about sinners to preserve His people and the word of God through the ages so all sinners who He will save by His grace for His purpose and for His pleasure will be saved.

As I said earlier, a true believer cannot be isolated from the church or from the world.

But I remind you that Jesus said we are here to make a difference.

Vs. 13 but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

You become absolutely foolish in the eyes of men and of no value to the kingdom if you lose your saltiness. For someone to say that they are a Christian and not live according to the norms of the kingdom while in the world will be seen for the hypocrisy that it is and the world will completely disregard you and the church will have need to discipline you and at the worst expel you and turn you over to Satan for chastisement with the hope that it will bring repentance and a full heart for doing kingdom service. (the Haiti and the Baptists thing)

And in making a difference we are also told

14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the
lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your
light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

The Lord Jesus is saying, I didn't give you light, I didn't make you light, I didn't enlighten your hearts and your minds so that you could keep it to yourself. I did it so that you would share it with the world, so that you would influence the world by truth. You are to be spiritual light in the midst of depravity. You are to be spiritual wisdom in the midst of untruth. And that requires you to have a burning desire to do good for the world. To be an active witness in the world is to show genuine concern for the world.

It is a fact that many of the advances made on behalf of helping the world maintain any sense of hope for the masses has come from kingdom people. The greatest advances in prison reform, orphanages, medical care, abolition of slavery, abolition of child labor and so on came first from God's people especially since the 17th Century.

(Note: Much of that was retreated from since the Monkey trial thru the 70's.

And so, we learn that we must hate the world without hating the world, but we must learn to love the world without loving the world. That is what Jesus is saying here. We must love the world without loving the world. Our love must be in accordance with truth and it must be without compromise.

We must truly have a concern for people. We must truly love them in the sense of looking out for their best interest, not simply feeling kindly towards them, but tangibly looking out for their best interest. But even as we do so, we must not love at the compromise of truth, or else our love ceases to be love.

And Jesus reiterates that in verse 16, when He says, let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven. We are God's people. We are salt and light. That is His estimation of us no matter what the world thinks. And because we are salt and light, we must live in such a way to bear witness to His work in us for He is working to will and to do his good pleasure in us and so be working out work out your salvation.

Christians must live in this way not to draw attention to themselves but to Christ and the Glory of the Father. The Pharisees did that. The Pharisees lived in such a way that the world would say to them, "how pious you are."

We said earlier, we will get attention if we are living the norms of the Beatitudes.

Christ says, My goal for you My disciples is that I want you to live in such a way that they will see your good works and not praise you, but glorify the Father who is in heaven .

"If we have no other way of doing good--if we are poor, and unlearned and unknown--yet we may do good by our lives. No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain. The feeblest light at midnight is of use." Albert Barnes

And I will add to that, because it will glorify my Father who is in Heaven.

This final statement in relation to being salt and light and its relationship to bringing glory to God the Father.

This is the first time in this Gospel that God is called Father. It will recur 44 times, a number only exceeded by John's Gospel. In the Sermon on the Mount it occurs 16 times.

We get so accustomed to calling God our Father that we fail to realize how revolutionary this was in Jesus' day when thinking of "the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity whose name is Holy", Isaiah 57:15, is how He was thought of.

Jesus forever changed the way we think of God.

Jesus forever changed the way we live for God.

(Move on to Ephesians...the church glorifying God.)

Now lets look at some teaching that was given by Paul a number of years later and that builds upon this completely in the context of the church giving glory to God.

I'll begin with a quote from my friend and brother, Shane Becker,

"(1) God unleashes the display of his glory (2) through dramatic cosmic restoration under the rule of the enthroned Christ (3) enjoyed by and enacted through the church" That is exquisitely esoteric coming from a laid back Aussie.

However it is intended to be understood by all believers in Christ's church.

Simplified: God displays His glory through the church.

In the era of the New Covenant:

God unleashes the display of His own glory more fully now than ever before- nothing is now held back, especially in light of His glory manifested in Christ as we discussed last evening.

The New Covenant Era is dramatic because it is exciting and tense in the revealing of gripping events and actions, in a way that grabs men's attention and causes an excited, shocked and even startled reaction to a very noticeable degree and often with surprising suddenness. The world was and is being turned upside down by the preaching of the Gospel.

The continued and increasing persecution of Christian people groups is an ever-present indicator of this and even it is unto the praise of His glorious grace.

This glory is all revealed under Christ because Christ rules and reigns as head of all things and in this New covenant era, the Church comprised of Jew and Gentile as, the bride, the body of Christ, His Temple in Him and One New People in Christ – is God's chosen means of displaying His glory now. This has never been accomplished before. (all Covenant theologians present here tonight may throw stones at me after this session)

The Church – is God's chosen means of displaying His glory now.

God is a glory displaying and pursuing God.

God is in pursuit of his own glory thru Christ's church. This is the overriding umbrella under which God operates in the world. We see this in Ephesians:

"he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace . . ." Ephesians 1:5-6a

We are also chosen ". . . in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:12

We are sealed by the Holy Spirit “. . . who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory”. Ephesians 1:14

The drama unfolds because “9And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In light of this Paul prays that we might know his power towards us . . .

20which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way

Christ is seated far above all rule and authority. God is bringing everything under his rule. He is the one who displays and unleashes in the universe the fullness of God who fills everything in every way. And the means is His church! Christ is the fullness of God who fills everything in everyway. And that fullness is displayed “in his body” – the church.

Through the church – the living theatre of God’s glory - displayed before a heavenly audience is – his love, his unsearchable riches, and his immeasurable grace that would cleanse and eternally unite a once sinful people to himself and to each other.

God is saying “Look at the display of my Glory! Look at the display of my Son and His redemptive work in and through His Church!

And all the heavenly hosts fall before Him in worship saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty. Awesome and mighty are his deeds for he has done great things!”

In Ephesians 2:12-16 you’ll recall that Paul reminded the Ephesians that they were ‘separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel . . . without hope and without God . . . but now in Christ Jesus you who were away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” and he has made the two – believing Jews and Gentiles – ONE by destroying the hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. For the purpose of creating “in Himself” “one new man” – “one body” – this is “the Church”

Something God put in place – according to his unfolding plan God had the centerpiece of his Glory up to this point in a people defined by decent and latitude & longitude.

God has now abolished all that established Israel as a special national people and has formed a new people that includes Jews and Gentiles according to Ephesians 2.

In this unfolding drama He has brought about dramatic change. It occurred at the cross “in his flesh”. Believing Gentiles are now central to the new work being built together into a holy temple as a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians 3:4-6

4In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5which was not made known to men in other

generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Again we see the mystery element again – not being revealed previously. But now been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets.

- What I would like you to see here is the details of the mystery.
- Mystery = Gentiles heirs. We knew God would bless all nations (Gen 12:3 – all peoples blessed through Abraham).
- National Israel appeared central to this plan (and was until now) – as though God would bless the world through the establishment of the commonwealth of Israel with the centralized temple.
- God has surprisingly turned this around with a New Citizenship.

Significance of the Temple - 2:19-22

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The OT Temple indwelt by God forms a picture to help us understand this NT Fulfillment – People form a temple to be indwelt by God's Spirit. You!

The picture here is not Spirit filling individuals but of the creation of a building – each of us are a part of – bricks as it were – with Christ the

chief cornerstone – this one building is filled by his Spirit. Just as one man has one Spirit so the one body of Christ is filled with his one Spirit.

There is one temple being created - we are being built together.

Oh that God may add another piece this day in this glorious ongoing construction project of the Spirit!

To appreciate the significance of this reality for Paul and the Ephesians - Acts 19 to 28 gives the big picture of what was happening that really fills Ephesians with greater context and meaning. Amazing. Let me give you some highlights in brief.

Paul in Ephesus:

Acts 19

- Paul enters the synagogue and ‘spoke boldly’ but because of Jews that banned Christianity he went to a secular hall to teach.

- Then sons of Sceva – local Jewish exorcists – seeing Paul’s success with miracles and healing in the name of Jesus try the same trick with a demon possessed man. And the man in whom was the evil spirit said he knew Jesus & Paul but had never heard of them gave them a beating so they ran off naked and wounded.

What drama- what glory 17“And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.”

Acts 20 – Paul later causes a Riot at Ephesus because his teaching is turning people away from the lucrative idol trade business. Rioters argued, “There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited”]

Acts 21 – Paul goes away Ephesus and while in Miletus sent for the Ephesian elders to join him there. In encouraging them he mentions vs 19 “served with tears and trails that happened to me through the plots of the Jews”. He tells them he is now going to Jerusalem and knows imprisonments and affliction await.

Acts 21: vs 28 Paul is arrested in Jerusalem wrongly accused of taking Trophimus the Ephesian into the temple. The Jews bringing the accusation are from ‘Asia’ almost certainly from Ephesus. (Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders refers to his stay with them as being ‘in Asia’.). No doubt they are seeking opportunity to expose Paul’s new Temple teaching and inclusion of the Gentiles.

In Acts 22 Paul gives his defense and is shut down when he says the Lord sent him to the Gentiles because of gospel rejection from the Jews.

At this point the Jews shut down the proceedings with a temper tantrum, throw off their cloaks, flings dust in the air, call for the death of Paul.

Paul as a Roman citizen is given some level protection in custody while over 40 Jews vow to neither eat nor drink until they kill him. Thanks to Paul’s sister’s son learning of the plot it was unsuccessful. And Paul ends up in Rome under house arrest.

And while under house arrest in Rome Paul writes to the Ephesians,
 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2.

People are the temple! Gentile believers as well as Jewish believers!!

And in proclaiming this truth to them in person and later in prison says, “I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you” (Eph 3:13)

The building of God's new temple with the Gentile inclusion, made up of Ephesian believers, had Paul put in prison.

And by further revelation such as in Ephesians we learn that by union with Christ we are his body, crucified with Christ, raised with him, seated in the heavenly places. And by extension now we are this temple, in which the Spirit dwells.

Paul is driving us in the book of Ephesians to understand the Truths about the Church, the body of Christ. He tells us in Ephesians:-

He blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He chose us, predestined us, cleanses us, redeems us, lavishes grace upon us, gives us an inheritance, seals us with his Spirit as the guarantee, gives us hope, riches, power. Gives us the risen enthroned Christ, unites us with Christ as 'his body', made us alive together with Christ. We are saved us by grace. We are his workmanship. He has abolished in his flesh all that separated us from the covenants of promise. We are brought near, members of the household of God, saints. The temple in which he dwells. Given knowledge and mysteries revealed. The display of his glory and wisdom. We can have Christ dwell in our hearts through faith. God is our father we are beloved children. Christ loved us – gave himself for us. The Spirit fills us.

And the Church is nourished by Christ.

In Conclusion

Church, Paul is seeking to wake you up and put before you a vision of reality – you are part of something incomprehensively awesome.

You are the final chapter of the display of God's glory through his son Jesus Christ (as head) and His body (the church).

You are the reality of which Christian marriage at its best is a picture – you are the bride of Jesus Christ whom he has pursued, purchased and wooed - as a loving savior and husband – he has captured your heart and drawn you lovingly to himself. The Temple in the Old Testament was but a picture, a shadow of a greater reality. That greater reality is here – right here in front of me. You are that greater reality. You are the temple of God in whom His Spirit dwells. You are the mystery kept hidden but now revealed – a new people for His own possession. You are the church of Jesus Christ.