



THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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What is the mission of the church? Jesus didn't save you just to come to a church service in a building on a Sunday week after week, and nothing else...

Introduction:

We've been going through the book of Ephesians over the last few weeks and it's been an incredible journey so far:

(1) The first message, by Pst. Marius, was about being a Kingdom Community and how God has already equipped us with all we need to thrive. (2) Then Craig spoke to us about God's Great Plan and how He chose us before we were born. (3) Week 3 Jen shared on our most important relationship, the focus of one of Paul's heartfelt prayers for this people in Ephesus. (4) After which we heard from Gavin Cox about God's amazing Grace and our transformation from DEATH to LIFE! (5) In week 5 Pst. Marius shared on the diverse, unity we have in Christ and going from exclusion to embrace. (6) Last week Henry spoke about us as God's family and how Jesus is our cornerstone or point of reference.

Today we're looking at the Mission of the Church. What does God's people on mission look like and what does that even mean?

Ephesians 3:1-13 NKJV

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— ² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, ³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, ⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. ⁸ me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. ¹³ Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

What is Paul proposing in this portion?

That God had a plan that was not clear and even hidden from his people in ages past, but now has been made known, by his Spirit. That plan is to reveal his sovereignty to all demonic powers and principalities, by expressing his power and establishing his authority through the church.

BOOKSHELF ILLUSTRATION:

Isaiah the prophet is shown the Messiah: Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The prophet has a vision of the future. He sees the child/son (MATTHEW – *revealed in the gospels*) and the government/the king (REVELATION). What the prophet **didn't** see is how the child became the king. How did that happen? The church is between the birth of Christ and the government being on his shoulders. The church is meant to establish God's kingdom on the earth.

So here's the BIG QUESTION:

How is God making His manifold wisdom known to the demonic powers and authorities through the church?

(Manifold - multi-faceted)

(Wisdom - understanding of how things work: based on his intimate knowledge of his design as well as the benefit of eternal omniscience)

1. Through a lifestyle whose allegiance is to a different King!

This is what happened at Ephesus:

- Read Acts 19:18-19 **Many believed, confessed their sins, and repented...**
- If we read Acts 19 we see a city being turned upside down because a community of people were following Jesus together.
 - Miracles (Acts 19:11-12)
 - Non-believers got beaten by demons (Acts 19:13-17)
 - Many more people in Ephesus believed and repented (Acts 19:18-19)
 - The Gospel was preached powerfully (Acts 19:20)
 - Riots and Unstable Economy (Acts 19:23-41)
- Because their allegiance was to Jesus:
 - They no longer wanted to be aligned with selfish, demonic lifestyles.
 - They realized that God had created them to follow Christ and love others.
 - They were created for Good Works
 - Rather than hatred: they would choose to love
 - Rather than complaining: they had an unexplainable joy
 - Rather than being contentious: they would choose peace
 - Rather than being irritated with others: they would be patient
 - Rather than being mean: they were kind
 - Rather than getting even: they would be good
 - They were faithful in the wake of evil
 - Gentle in the face of violence
 - And self-controlled when everyone else was losing control

- This was a people who had been raised from death (of living in sin and following the way of the world ruled by the demonic) to life (by grace seated with Christ at the right hand of God far above the forces they previously served), and their lives reflected this grace.
- When demonic forces (principalities and powers in heavenly places) look at the church, they are confronted with this reality: The God of heaven is their Father and Jesus Christ is their King!

2. What caused them to live like this? The Spirit of God inside of them!

When we read a letter like this in the Bible, we must always be mindful of the fact that Paul is writing this to people he has a relationship with, people he has history with; and many times, he's referring to things that happened before this letter!

Here's an example:

- **When he writes this verse...** Ephesians 1:13 NKJV

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

- **He's referring to Acts 19:1-7** (Read the account)

They lived this way because they had heard the Gospel that Jesus loves them, they put their trust in Him, and received the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

What happened to them was a fulfillment of an ancient prophecy.

- Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34 NKJV

³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

When we read, we must try to carefully understand what the scripture is saying. In these **verses the prophet is saying, "We will know God's ways and want to walk in them because they will be part of us!"**

MARRIAGE ILLUSTRATION:

When you get married, you **become part of each other**. You know what one another's desires or likes and dislikes are, and you live in a way that reflects your love for that person.

God and his will became part of these disciples, in that he came to dwell in them, and it turned Ephesus upside down!

The mission of God's people is to make God and his Kingdom visible to everyone, through the way we live our lives.

Conclusion:

God's plan, that in the past was a mystery and has now been clearly revealed, was that the Jews and Gentiles would be united as God's chosen people through the cross, in one body called THE CHURCH.

This church empowered by the indwelling of God's promised Holy Spirit would establish God's kingdom, by the way they live their lives, wherever they are. Thereby unveiling God's manifold (multi-faceted) wisdom (understanding of how things work: based on his intimate knowledge of his design as well as the benefit of eternal omniscience)

Story: Our mission is to love others; to show God's grace and wisdom by the way we live our lives and treat others.

We reveal God's cleverness to the forces of darkness when we live out Christ in our lives. Every time you act kindly, make somebody smile, deposit the gospel into somebody's heart because you've done something good, the demonic are confronted with God's wisdom and they hate it. But that's our mission.

If you're a Christian, this is your mission.

Invitation:

If you're not a Christian, Jesus said, "Unless you're born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. What is he saying? Just like those early Ephesian disciples, without the Spirit of God, we cannot live the life I'm talking about.

We are all lost and blind in our sin without Christ. The good news is that Jesus died on a cross for you and me. He took the penalty for our sin so that we can freely follow him. He calls each one of us to repent, put our trust in him, believe in him and be born again by receiving his Spirit.

If you have never surrendered your life to Christ... Maybe you've lived as a Christian, but never repented of your sin and received the Holy Spirit and been born again, like those Ephesian disciples, turn to Him now. Pray this prayer from your heart.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father I am a sinner **and I'm separated from you because of my sin.** But you sent your Son Jesus Christ to die on a cross for all who repent and place their trust in You. Thank you for sending your Son.

Lord Jesus today I repent. I turn away from sin and my own way **and I turn to you...**To trust you, follow you and obey you with my life. Please place your Spirit in me as you promised to all those who trust in you. AMEN

If you prayed this prayer, please contact one of our pastors or community group leaders, so we can help you on your journey. We are born again into a family, the family of God – the church. Our pastoral contact number is 072 986 4368.

Discussion questions:

1. When looking down through history, what did those in the Old Testament not see? What had been kept 'hidden' by God that has now been revealed?
2. What is the mission of the church?
3. What happened to those disciples (of John the Baptist) that Paul came across in Ephesus (see Acts 19) that caused them to live so differently to their former lifestyles that it caused a riot and turned the city 'upside down'?