

The Holy Spirit: The Powerful Serve in Evangelism

Ephesians 3:7-10

What is it that defines the Church? What does it mean to be the church of God? Is it to serve its own interests and vision? To serve others in the world to make their life better? What we see from Peter is that the fundamental nature of the Church is simply this: God's own possession. What defines the Church is that it belongs to God. It is not its own to be pandered to or made comfortable in our self-interest and stale religiosity. The Church exists *for* God and He lives and moves among us as a powerful, disturbing, soul-shaking, barrier-breaking, and transforming presence.

1. The Servant of the Gospel is Graced with God's Power for God's Purpose.

- a. "Minister of the gospel" is the same word for "servant"
 - i. It is not merely the servant's purpose, but his Master's purpose
 - ii. It is not merely the servant's ministry, but an extension of Christ's ministry
 1. Matthew 28:16-20
 - iii. We all desire to serve Christ Jesus, and we do so by calling each others' attention to worship and glorify God
 1. God is pre-eminent, therefore He has graced Paul so that people would worship Him
 2. Missions only exists where there is a grand view of the greatness of God
- b. This service was given to him by the grace of God.
 - i. It was undeserved and a gift, unable to be paid for
 - ii. It is this ministry and the enabling power of God to fulfill this ministry that is the gift
 - iii. Romans 12:4-9
 1. We are all given gifts in which to serve Him and each other, and they are given by grace
 2. There are a variety of gifts, but all are from God and all are to be used to build each other up in Christ with love and humility
- c. It was God's power that worked within him.
 - i. It was God's ability and power that graced Paul and enabled Paul
 1. 1 Corinthians 2:4 (Athens whipping to Corinth weakness and effectiveness)
 2. 1 Thessalonians 1:5 (gospel came not only in words but by the power of the HS in *full conviction*)
 - ii. It is the activity of power produced by the ability of God Himself
 1. Romans 15:13
 2. Ephesians 3:16ff
 - iii. Paul was graced with God's power to be a minister of the gospel
 1. He was made a minister by God's grace and was able to carry out this awesome responsibility by the gracious gift of God's enabling power.
 2. This powerful enablement corresponds to the revelation of the mystery of God's grace shown toward the Gentiles in Christ. In the end, God is to be praised, for no human could endeavor to initiate or accomplish such work in his own power.
 3. In the same manner, as we serve the Lord with our gifts, know that it is not my our might, nor by our strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:6) that any good is accomplished.
 - a. There is no room for pride ('let your love be genuine') b/c of success
 - b. There is no room for fear b/c if we are serving God, walking in His Spirit (complete and utter dependence upon Jesus Christ), then His work will be fulfilled to His purposes

2. God's Calling and Power in our Service Brings Humility.

- a. God graced him as the "less than the least."
 - i. Sudden exclamation of wonder that God would use him
 - ii. Word used is literally "the leaster" (a comparative formed off of a superlative)
- b. He has a deep appreciation for God's grace because he has a deep understanding of his unworthiness
 - i. Foremost of sinners (1 Tim 1:15)
 - ii. He had blasphemed and persecuted Christ (1 Tim 1:13; Acts 9:4-5; 26:11, 14-15)
 - iii. He persecuted the church (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6)
- c. Paul understands that his calling, his ministry, and God's enablement to proclaim the gospel all come from grace, the very working of the power of God in his life.
- d. Not only our salvation, but also our very living out of the Gospel and His calling upon our lives is of radical, merciful grace.
 - i. We must use our gifts in an attitude of humility, remembering the severity of our sins
 - ii. We must use our gifts with an attitude of boldness, remembering the goodness of God in Christ
 - iii. The working out of good in our lives is the presence of the Holy Spirit, working out in us a deep dependence upon Jesus Christ alone for our acceptance before God and for our ability to communicate the Gospel.
 1. When we serve others under our own power (consciously or subconsciously) it leads us to boast in our own power and to make God into our image or into the image of our hearers.
 - a. Check your responses when you are unappreciated
 - b. Check your service when nobody knows or recognizes it was you who served
 2. How do you read the Word of God? As a book that helps your life, or as the book that reveals who God is?
 - a. The Bible is about God and His purpose, not about us.
 - i. Colossians 1:16
 - ii. Genesis 1:1
 - iii. John 20:31
 - b. Scripture is about God revealing Himself
 - i. Hebrews 1:2-3
 - c. Most Believers Read Scripture as if it were All About Them
 - i. What do most people see as the themes of the book of Daniel?
 1. God's Provision for Me
 2. God's Protection over Me
 3. Bible Prophecy
 - ii. Look at 4:34 and 6:25-27
 1. Daniel is about revealing the one true God to other peoples
 - d. We Must Change the Way we View Scripture
 - i. The Bible is a God Book, not a 'me' Book!

3. We are All Graced to Preach the Gospel.

- a. Paul was specifically graced to preach to the Gentiles.
 - i. "Preach" is the verb of the noun, *euangelion*, or "gospel"
 - ii. Herald the good news
 - iii. For the Christian, it is not merely good news of principles of truth, but it is Jesus
 1. We preach Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of sinners, and the Lover of the saints
- b. He was to preach of the riches of Christ.
 - i. The abundant graces of Jesus mentioned earlier in Ephesians

He chose us (v4)
 He sanctified us (v4)
 He predestined us (v5)
 He adopted us (v5)
 He freely bestowed His grace upon us (v6)
 He redeemed us (v7)
 He forgave us (v7)
 He lavished His grace upon us (v8)
 He revealed the mystery of His will (v9)
 He gave us an inheritance already obtained (v11)
 He predestined us to sonship (v11)
 He sealed us with the Holy Spirit of His promise (v13)
 He pledged to us our inheritance (v14)
 He promised complete redemption (v14)
 He calls us His own possession (v14)

ii. The riches of Christ are unfathomable.

1. only other time word is used in Romans 11:33 pertaining to the hardening of Israel and the subsequent sovereign grace of God given to the Gentiles and the possible return of Israel at a later time due to God's unfathomable grace and wisdom
2. This truth of God's grace cannot be searched and understood, it is incomprehensible, beyond man's ability to investigate.
3. This is a mystery *that must be revealed by God* and that Paul has been given the responsibility, honor, and empowerment to accomplish, though he was unworthy.
 - a. We need reminded all the time of what God has revealed, because we lose sight of the beautiful truth of God's grace in Jesus (Titus 3:1-8) and how it changes the way we live, think, feel, and act toward God and others.

4. The Revelation of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus is For All Peoples

a. God's heart has always been to reveal Himself to all the peoples of the earth

i. Old Testament

1. The calling of Abraham was so that God could set up a people by which to show Himself to all the nations as the One True God.
2. Ps 67
3. (Gen 18:18; 22:18; 1 Chr 16:23-31; Ps 22:27-31; 72:11,17; 86:9; 96:1-4; Is 2:2-3; 52:10; Dan 7:13-14)

ii. New Testament

1. Jesus is the seed of Abraham, the light to all the nations
 - a. Even His most explosive act of cleansing the Temple of the moneychangers was about God's heart for the nations
 - b. Mark 11:15-17, it was about the Temple being used for prayer *by the nations* that was being disrupted. The court of the Gentiles, the outer courts where the non-Jewish came to pray had become a marketplace. The nations had no place to pray.
2. Matt 28:16-20
3. (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8; 2; Rom 16:25-26; Phil 4:14-19; Rev 7:9)

b. Paul was to reveal the secret plan of God's mystery to all humanity.

- i. Though it was impossible for him to reach all of humanity, he felt a responsibility to both Jews and Gentiles, all people groups to know God's wonderful reconciliation in Jesus.
- ii. This mystery was hidden through the ages.

1. The mystery of God's grace shown to *all* peoples, that God has brought all different classes of people and made them into one new entity in Christ: the mystery of the church
 - iii. This mystery was hidden in God.
 1. The church, the community of the delivered (not due to anything they had done, or of who they were, or of what nationality they hailed, but due only to God's gracious choice), was a new thing
 2. God created all things.
 - a. Just as God created all things at the beginning, so now is He creating a new entity for Himself, as was planned from the beginning but hidden, where His glory is revealed in a community of people saved by His grace through the loving substitutionary sacrifice of His Son, Jesus the Christ
 - b. The ability and power of God in the first creation lend credence to the ability and power of God in the new creation.
 - c. The church, humble and bold in Christ, is still a new phenomenon to the world. They don't understand it and they need the gospel of grace revealed to them.
 - iv. Paul is called to "give light" to this mystery
 1. Jesus is the light of the world, the source of the light (John 8:12)
 2. We simply proclaim Jesus as the Savior of sinners and the Lord of all to ALL the peoples of the world
 - a. We are light-bearers (Rev 1:20); we don't create the light or produce the light, but we simply carry the light to the nations
 - b. The gospel is the light (2 Cor 4:4; Acts 26:18) of Jesus
- 3. "The light that shines the farthest shines the brightest at home."**
- c. Luke 24:46-49a
 - i. "and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you."

O Church! Community of saint-sinners! You have been called to reveal to the world the beauty of Jesus Christ and His love for humanity. His working of grace to us sinners is what gives us the title "saints." Though it may seem like a large order to fill, to tell of God's wondrous work of forgiveness in Christ, He has not asked you to do it without empowering you with His own Spirit to accomplish your calling. If you are in Christ, then you have the very presence of God within you, giving your power to proclaim and accomplishing His own results as you serve Him and serve others. Do not rely on your fancy presentations or your perfection of words, but rely on the Holy Spirit's power and His working to effect the revelation of the Gospel to others. Don't wait until you understand everything, but merely proclaim the Gospel. It is good news: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners like me. I don't deserve it, I haven't done anything to gain favor with God, but He is merciful and gracious and has died in my place. I am saved by grace through Jesus Christ alone. I believe it. I proclaim it. He is beautiful. I am thankful." Let the Spirit work His power as you tell the Gospel story in weakness, without any power of your own, or beauty of your own, or nicely wrapped packaging for the story. Leave it bare, raw before the world and the Spirit's power of regeneration and renewal will bring about reconciliation between God and man with His own power. The Holy Spirit is our powerful serve.

The New Philosophical Shift in Missions at EBF:

1. Personalization in all evangelistic endeavors, both local and global
2. Unification in evangelistic focus, together globally, in home groups locally
3. Focus on reaching the unreached, those with little or no access to the gospel
4. Focus on reaching "ALL NATIONS" with the good news of Jesus Christ