

## To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . A Church is Faithful

Ephesians 3:7-13

January 16, 2011

**Intro.** Your assignment is to write a brief report on what you see and understand God to be doing in the world today. Or perhaps you find yourself in the awkward situation of being asked directly by a friend or co-worker . . . ‘you believe in God, what in the world is he doing?’ Some would be able to respond with clarity and tell stories of changed lives now serving the gospel, victories over unseen spiritual forces, bold acts of faith and unusual grace in suffering that all point to the power of Jesus Christ being revealed today in the gospel.

Others however would find themselves a bit unable to be quite so clear or definitive. Perhaps that is due to simply not knowing what to look for or how to recognize God at work. Perhaps it is because so many have become discouraged, weary or distracted . . . some of us have lost heart that God is in fact doing much of anything these days. We may not appear on the surface as weary or discouraged because we give acceptable answers. God must be at work, you should hear how our pastors and friends talk about him. God must be at work; look at all I am trying to do for him. God must be at work, the Bible says he is.

The underlying concern being addressed in chapter 3 is that the churches reading this letter not become discouraged, distracted or grow weary in their assignment of being the people of God. It is relatively easy to lose heart when involved with teaching truth, defending truth, loving sinners, suffering, engaging in spiritual warfare, expressing bold faith and waiting on God in prayer . . . seemingly with fewer workers and less money than is necessary. What happens in many cases in churches like ours is that very subtly the primary question of ‘how do we please God and remain faithful to him?’ becomes an unaddressed assumption and replaced with some other compelling question or issue. We are tempted to switch the primary question from faithfulness to measurable success, from God’s pleasure to our satisfaction or from his glory to our innovation.

Using the terms and themes of Ephesians (3:10, 13, 21; 1:6, 14), the primary question we must address and conform to is ‘How do we as a church reflect the glory of God?’ Put another way . . . How can we bring to light who God is and what he is doing? How can we be faithful to God and what he is doing?

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

The glory of KSBC is and must continue to be remaining faithful to the assignment God has given. This section of scripture teaches us the concepts and vocabulary that we should use to understand and communicate what God is doing in and through the church in these days. Two core concepts of stewardship and mystery help us understand that God is drawing together a people for his name through the gospel of Jesus Christ. This new group is a multi racial, multi cultural who share together in all things in Christ Jesus.

These verses also teach us that as a part of this body, the church, that God is creating and building for his glory we have assigned roles. We are responsible to bring to light the gospel of Jesus Christ, the mystery. We are to make known or reveal the multifaceted wisdom of God to the powers of the unseen world. We, as Christ’s new creation, are in fact at the center of working out God’s eternal plan for the ages. Sometimes, it doesn’t feel like we are that strategically placed and eternally significant.

What is God doing? He is using people like you and me to get the message out . . . bring to light his great love and power to create, redeem and enjoy people who worship him and him alone.

How can we, a part of the church of God called KSBC, make plain how intelligent, wise, loving, trustworthy and gracious our creator God is? As we answer this from our text this morning, we learn the concepts and vocabulary that will fill our answers to the question . . . what is God doing?

The church is at its best . . . showing off its glory as the people of God . . . when it is faithfully pursuing these 4 powerful values made possible by the Spirit and the gospel . . .

### **1. The radical commitment of a servant.**

**7-8**

The apostle Paul teaches by way of personal example a basic truth . . . God saves, transforms and uses individuals for his greater purposes. He helps us understand that all that God had done in his life can be reduced to being made a servant of God and the gospel.

Servant . . . term for minister or servant. An agent, intermediary, assistant, aide for someone . . . not an exalted position. The term points more toward a commitment as a worker for God rather than a lowly position. The point is that after conversion, Paul had a new identity and mission given him by God, he had become a worker for God and his eternal plan.

- Your identity as God’s servant is granted to you by God. 7-8  
 3 motives for embracing your identity as servant of God:  
 God’s grace                      God’s power                      Riches of Christ
- Your identity as God’s servant is defined in personal terms. 8  
 ‘The very least of all the saints’  
 This expression of unworthiness is both common and personal. He admits to weakness, failure, temptation experienced by everyone but really believes he is the leastest of the least because of his sinful past. 1Cor. 15:9      1Tim.1:15

**2. A consistent message of victory to the opposition. 9-11**

A significant part of God’s plan for the ages is to show his splendid wisdom by defeating the forces of evil. The church plays a huge role in both modeling and carrying out the victory over the unseen forces of evil.

Trace the development of the war with rulers and authorities . . .

- 1:10 God’s eternal plan is to unite all things on heaven and earth . . . includes evil forces
- 1:20-21 Victory over evil forces achieved and recognized in Christ’s resurrection/enthronement
- 2:6 Believers seated in victory at conversion
- 3:10 Church displays Christ and victory in real time
- 6:12 Church continues battle with unseen forces in real time

We/the church live as a constant, tangible reminder to the watching forces of evil that God in Christ can save and transform people into a right relationship with himself and that their authority is broken.

- 1. The radical commitment of a servant. 7-8
- 2. A consistent message of victory to the opposition.9-10

**3. A confident trust in God. 12**

One of the choice benefits of a child of God is access to the Father. 2:18 teaches that access by the Spirit into the presence of God is enjoyed by both Jew and Gentile and therefore is evidence of God’s drawing together a people for his glory.

Note how the text of verse 12 draws our attention from the unseen realities of spiritual warfare to the very real experiences of present living. In Christ we presently possess confidence and courage to trust God to deliver on his promises. This access to God cannot be hindered by unseen powers or authorities.

This fearless confidence to enter the presence of God is evident in that we are no longer afraid of God, no longer demoralized by our shameful past, are quick to pray for help (Heb.4:16) and are confident to encourage others (Heb. 10:19ff).

This bold and confident access is immediately seen in prayer of 3:14 ff.

This confident access is evidence of our active faith in Christ as well as dependent on his faithfulness.

Your answer to what God is doing should include a few stories of confident, bold dependence on God.

**4. A joyful acceptance of suffering. 13; 3:1**

Note that the underlying concern that prompted the detailed and personal explanation of 3:1-13 was the experience of suffering that Paul was enduring at the time imprisoned in Rome. The message to the church is this . . . suffering is a significant part of advancing God's plan for the ages.

Suffering is a necessary precondition for experiencing glory. Heb.2:10

Sufferings . . . trouble, affliction

Relationship between gospel advancement/preaching and suffering . . . 2Corinthians 4:4-18

What is God doing? He is revealing his glory through the building of his church. His church is being formed through the proclamation of the gospel that results in one body of forgiven, redeemed people. His body, the church makes it's mark . . . does it's thing . . . fulfills that which it was saved to do, by changed lives now serving the gospel, victories over unseen spiritual forces, bold acts of faith and unusual grace in suffering that all point to the power of Jesus Christ being revealed today in the gospel.

### **Take Aways**

We call you to faithfulness . . .

to a radical commitment of serving the gospel with your life and resources.

to a victorious life in Christ that reminds the forces of evil of their decisive defeat.

to a bold dependence on God that reflects the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all things.

to a joyful acceptance of suffering that draws attention to the coming glory of god.

### **Study Questions**

1. Read Ephesians 3 as a group. Note observations of terms, themes or questions.

2. Share your thoughts/responses to the question . . . What is God doing in the world today?

3. What causes you to become weary or discouraged at Kossuth Street? Why? Are there good/acceptable and bad/selfish answers to this? Is it ok to become discouraged because you pray hard, love well, serve faithfully, suffer patiently and preach clearly but there is seemingly no response or impact in people's lives? Why?

4. Share your thoughts about the tension that we feel about measuring God's work in terms of attendance, decisions, worship experience, offerings and buildings. What about these types of measurements are healthy concerns for the people of God? Why?

5. The authors of 'The Trellis and the Vine' list the following three implications/consequences of a biblical view of God's purposes:

a. If this is really what God is doing in our world then it is time to say goodbye to our small and self-oriented ambitions, and abandon ourselves to the cause of Christ and his gospel.

b. The growth God is looking for in our world is growth in people.

c. This people growth happens only through the power of God's Spirit as he applies his word to people's hearts.

What do think of these and how do they compare with the message of Eph. 3:1-13?

6. Review each of the 4 ways that God's power and plan is revealed through the church.

Which of the 4 grab your attention more than others? Why?

Which do you think is missing most in our church? Why?

Which is most recently obvious in our church? Why?

7. Pray together as a group for the glory of God to be shown in KSBC . . . pray in ways specific to your discussion and response to the scriptures.

