

STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at johnny@stoneharborchurch.org.

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

Date: Aug 7, 2010
 Series: The Church of God's Intention
 Part: Part 2 – What God Intends the Church to Do
 Section: Mission
 Topic: Mission
 Message Title: **God Intends the Church to Join Him in His Mission - 3**
 Outline Title: To overcome the difficulties in mission we must...
 Short Title: Overcoming Difficulties
 Text: Various
 Key Words: Mission, Witness

Message Outline

God Intends the Church to Join Him on His Mission

Overcoming Difficulties

a. **Burn** Off the **Gospel** Fog

By understanding the big picture (Gen-Rev) of God's mission.

The Map of the Word

Creation (Gen 1-2)

Fall (Gen 3)

Redemption

in Promise (Gen 3)

in Type/Picture/Part (Gen 4 – Mal 4)

in Fulfillment (Jesus Christ)

New Creation (NT)

Already Secured (Inaugurated)

Not Yet Fully Realized (Consummation)

b. **Live** in the **Gospel** Light

c. **Articulate** the **Gospel** Message

d. **Persevere** in the **Gospel** Fight

Related Scripture

1. Gen 1; John 15; Acts 1; Acts 2; 2 Cor 5

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. How clearly do you understand the gospel?
2. What can we do to improve our understanding of the gospel?
3. How can you more completely live your life in light of the gospel?
4. What is the gospel message?
5. What do you need to do to be able to verbalize the gospel effectively?
6. What fights against your personal living out and articulating the gospel?
7. How can you persevere against the forces aligned against the gospel?

Memory and Meditation Verse

"...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NASB)

a) Live in the Gospel Light

What prevents us from joining God on His mission spoken of in the gospel? We have seen that first and foremost it is the fog that surrounds our **understanding** of the gospel message.

We are challenged in our understanding of the gospel by:

- the complexity of the message (since it is really the message of the entire Bible),
- our distance from its original telling (21st century western man crossing millennia, culture and geography to access truths spoken long ago to people far away), by
- the nature of the content (heavenly not earthly), by
- the means of its apprehension (by faith receiving the revelation of God vs. by the observations based on our natural senses)...

We are helped in our understanding of the gospel by a good map of the word:

- creation
- redemption
- new creation

Even when we do get our head around the message of the gospel and understand that it is the story of God's mission (in which He has invited us to join Him – the mission of restoring creation through redemption in Christ into the new creation of His ultimate purpose) it still remains a significant challenge to **live** in the reality defined by those truths.

Having been raised in the world apart from the gospel and having lived by-in-large according to our natural thinking we by default live in the natural light defined by what we see, hear, touch, taste and smell in the order assembled by our human logic and declared normal by our culture. Yet the reality of God is bigger than the natural world accessible to our 5 senses and culturally acceptable human logic. There is more truth than the truth to be apprehended by our natural senses working with our natural logic.

To join God on His mission, we must NOT **live** primarily by this natural light but instead **we must live by the "gospel light"** – the spiritual truth of God and His mission to restore creation in Christ into its new and ultimate state which is according to God's eternal design.

Such a life lived in light of the gospel requires that we respond to the spiritual truths that although are unseen are none the less real and even of primary importance over what we can see. Paul says it like this in 2 Cor 4:¹⁸

- ... we ^(A)look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;
- for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Practically speaking how do we go about living in light of the gospel instead of limiting our existence to responding only to the natural?

The simple and sufficient answer: **We must live by faith!**

Again, Paul puts it like this: ⁷for ^(A)we walk by faith, not by sight—2Cor 5:7

Let's look at the passage in which this phrase is used. 2 Cor 5: 1-8

Read 2 cor 5:1-8

Our existence is not defined by the natural temporal 5 sense reality, but in a much more complete way by the spiritual eternal reality of life redeemed by and in union with Christ Jesus. And this life is accessed by FAITH!

The writer of the book of Hebrews helps us get a grip on faith saying, “¹Now faith is the ^(A)assurance of things ^(B)hoped for, the conviction of ^(C)things not seen.” (Heb 11)

Isn't that counter natural? We are called to live by faith and faith is what we are convinced of regarding God but what we can NOT see.

Let me see if I can give you a natural example of this spiritual truth of living in the light of something you can't see.

John and Kara on their Pacific crossing encountering days of overcast weather that prevented use of natural visual cues for their navigation.

In their case they were obliged to rely on instruments (GPS data and compass readings) in order to plot their course on their charts and set their sails to get where they wanted to go.

In our case as Christians on mission with God we are not headed to the Marquesas Islands we are headed for heaven (perfect communion with God); and the instruments of our journey are not the GPS and compass but faith and the Spirit of God; and the charts upon which we plot our course are not maps made by men but the message of the gospel of God.

Also unlike Kara and John we are not just trying to get to a destination and enjoy ourselves along the way. God has called us to be a part of His mission to redeem His creation. As we travel on the journey of our lives God would have us join

Him on His mission by living in the reality of the gospel in such a way that others would come to know Him as He is and would themselves be redeemed and born anew, leaving dead-life (life apart from God) behind and enjoying the live-life (life with and in Christ) He intends for us.

In order to be on mission with God we must live in light of the gospel that He is redeeming creation in Christ.

What life decision are you facing right now? Maybe you are making a decision regarding a major purchase, or whether or not to pursue a certain relationship, or accept a certain job, or live in a certain place... If you are to live in light of the gospel of God you will want to consider more than the natural reality that you see with your eyes. You will also want to consider the spiritual reality of God and what He is up to.

You might ask, how would the Lord have me approach this decision so that it would best serve His mission of redemption unto the new creation of His eternal design? Try it out in one of the big life decisions you are facing. Get that decision in your mind right now. Lord, what should I do that would best serve Your mission -- the mission you have invited me to be a part of as one of your redeemed new creations in Christ? How would You be most glorified in this life decision? How would You best be made known to the parties related to this decision? What would be most consistent with the spiritual reality of You as loving Father and me as devoted son and or You as King and me as Your vice-regent under the Lordship of Christ?

Those questions are fundamentally different than the questions the world and our natural natures would have us ask. What we would naturally ask is how can I maximize my benefit? What would give me the greatest return? What do I feel like doing? How can I work this for my gain? Do you hear the difference? The natural man living by sight will seek his own best. The redeemed man living by faith will seek God's glory and the best of his fellow man which is of course that they would themselves come to know God as one of His redeemed and grow up into the likeness of Christ to enjoy Him forever.

Bring those questions to bear on your life decisions and let them help you live in light of the gospel and thereby effectively execute your mission.

The same is true for the church as a body. We must make decisions in the same way. Should we buy a building to meet in or should we continue to rent or should we meet in our home or should we meet in some other situation I have not even considered? Lord, what should we do that would best serve **Your** mission -- the mission you have invited us to be a part of as your redeemed body in Christ? How would **You** be most glorified in this church-life decision? How would **You** best be made known to those who don't know You? What would be most consistent with the spiritual reality of You as a loving Father and us as Your devoted sons and daughters, or You as King and us as Your vice-regents under the Lordship of Christ?

Wouldn't it be great to know that the reason you have made the decisions you have made is for the glory of God and the furtherance of His mission? I think it would be.

Matthew 5:16

"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.

In order for the church to do the mission God has called it to we must join God on His mission and make decisions in light of His gospel. A part of living the gospel is articulating it. The next hurdle we are to overcome is the muddle of our words when we tell others about God's gospel of Christ.

b) Articulate the Gospel Message

In your own words on one piece of paper tell a pretend friend or loved one what God is up to in history.

(6) Try it

(a) Write it out

(i) Creation

(ii) Fall

(iii) Redemption

(a) in promise

(b) in part in OT Israel

(c) in fulfillment in Christ

(iv) New Creation

(v) How His action has touched your life

(b) Let me read it

(i) I asked Leslie to order a special box of red pens

(ii) I'll return it to you with kind comments

(7) Lick your wounds

(a) It can hurt to have someone evaluate your work

(8) Try it again

(9) Attend Kit's Conference

(10) Repeat 1-3 until you can articulate the gospel message with ease and Biblical accuracy

(11) Pray

(a) for God to open the spiritual eyes of your real lost friends and loved ones

(b) for God to give you an opportunity to share the gospel message with one or more of your real friends or love ones

(12) Share the Gospel Message

With ease born of familiarity and understanding share the gospel with those God gives you opportunity.

Trans. – So we just have to learn how to live and articulate the gospel and then we are on easy street, right? Everyone in front of whom you have lived out the gospel and shared the message of the gospel will now accept Jesus and will rapidly become the next Billy Graham, right? Wrong. The gospel will be resisted and we will encounter great difficulties even once we have understood it and learned to live and articulate it with ease and accuracy. Therefore we will need to...

c) Persevere in the Gospel Fight

Let me read a familiar passage. As I do take note of what type of imagery Paul used in describing the Christian life. Eph 6...

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.
¹¹ Put on the full armor of God,
 so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,
 but against the rulers, against the powers,
 against the world forces of this darkness,
 against the spiritual forces of wickedness
 in the heavenly
 places.
¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God,
 so that you will be able to resist in the evil day,
 and having done everything, to stand firm.
¹⁴ Stand firm therefore,
 HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and
 HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
¹⁵ and having shod YOUR FEET
 WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE **GOSPEL** OF
 PEACE;
¹⁶ in addition to all,
 taking up the shield of faith
 with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil
 one.
¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and
 the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
¹⁸ With all prayer and petition
 pray at all times in the Spirit,
 and with this in view,
 be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,
¹⁹ and
 pray on my behalf,
 that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth,
 to make known with boldness the mystery of the **gospel**,
²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains;
 that in proclaiming **it**
 I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

What type of imagery did Paul choose to use? He used battle, war, mission, fight imagery. Why? He chose fight-speak because, our Christian life is not a life of ease and safety to be lived out exclusively in chapels and living rooms. Rather the life God calls us to as followers of Christ is a life of costly mission to the rough and tumble world in which still lived those God is even now calling to Himself.

Be reminded how our Lord and Savior sends us out into the world. Mat 10...

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves;
 so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.
 17 "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and
 scourge you in their synagogues;
 18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake,
 as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.
 19 "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say;
 for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.
 20 "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in
 you.
 21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child;
 and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.
 22 "You will be hated by all because of My name,
 but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

This life as a disciple of Christ on mission with God is not a picnic. It comes at a cost. Mat 16...

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples,
 "If anyone wishes to come after Me,
 he must deny himself, and
 take up his cross and
 follow Me.
 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it;
 but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Your mission will require your perseverance in both the small and the large the mundane and the extraordinary.

If it were not so Jesus would not have warned his disciples that following Him would require so much. Mat 8

19 Then a scribe came and said to Him,
 "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."
 20 Jesus said to him,
 "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests,
 but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
 21 Another of the disciples said to Him,
 "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."
 22 But Jesus said to him,
 "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead."

If it were not so James would not have had to teach us so clearly (James 1:2-4) to

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
 4 And let endurance have its perfect result,
 so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

If it were not so Peter would not have to look forward to the future acknowledging the trials all Christians must face when he said in 1 Peter 1...

6 In this you greatly rejoice,
 even though now for a little while, if necessary,
 you have been distressed by various trials,

If it were not so Paul would not have given such direct attention to the place of and value of trials and suffering.

In Romans 5 he says...

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith
into this grace in which we stand;
and we exult in hope of the glory of God.
³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations,
knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;
⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;
⁵ and hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

In 2 Tim 1 he exhorts young Pastor Timothy,

⁸ ...do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or
of me His prisoner,
but
join with me in **suffering**
for the gospel
according to the power of God,

I need not go on, you know that the call to be a disciple of Jesus on mission with Him is costly and will require your perseverance. Therefore persevere! For once you have been so approved James says there is for you a crown of life. (James 1:12)

There is no greater life than the life lived for the glory of God. There is no greater feeling of a life well lived than to be able to say with Paul in 2 Tim 4:

⁷ I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the course,
I have kept the faith;
⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day;
and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

There are no sweeter words I can imagine hearing than the words of the master to his slave in [Matthew 25:21](#)

"His master said to him,
'**Well done, good and faithful** slave
You were **faithful** with a few things,
I will put you in charge of many things;
enter into the joy of your master.'

Let's pray together!

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