

J.J.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 3: 7-13

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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INTRODUCTION : Two Sundays ago we talked about why it's important and a priority to go to church.

Title: Heads or Tails? You heard about the golfer named Jones who was twenty minutes late at the first tee one Sunday morning, and the other three members of the regular four-some were almost ready to drive off without him. "I agreed with my wife," explained Jones, "that this Sunday I'd toss a coin to see whether I played golf or went to church. Heads, I played golf. Tails, I went to church. And you know fellows, I had to toss that coin forty-three times before it came up heads."

Title: No Decision to Make The late J. Edgar Hoover was once asked, "**Should I make my child go to Sunday school and church?**" His reply was both Scriptural and practical. "Yes," said the former head of the FBI, "you certainly should, and with no further discussion about the matter. You may be startled by my answer, but what do you say to Junior when he comes to breakfast on Monday morning and announces he isn't going to school anymore? You know! He goes! How do you answer him when he comes home covered with mud and says, 'I'm not going to take a bath.' Junior bathes, doesn't he? Why all this timidity, then, in the realm of spiritual guidance and growth? You say you're going to let him wait and decide what church he wants to go to when he is old enough? Quit your kidding! You wouldn't wait until he's grown up to choose whether he wishes to be clean or dirty, would you? Do you let him decide for himself whether to take medicine when he's sick? Do you? How shall we respond, then, when Junior says he doesn't want to go to Sunday school and church? That's easy! Just be consistent. Tell him, 'Son, in our house we ALL go to Sunday school and church, and that includes you!' Your firmness and example will furnish a bridge over which youthful rebellion will then travel into many rich and satisfying spiritual experiences." **Note : People sometimes have a hard time going to church because we fail to know the privilege that we have.**

Ephesians 3:7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Pray

BACKGROUND :

- Paul was writing to the Ephesian church. They were not Jews. They were Gentiles or pagans before.
- In Ephesians chapter 1, he explained that true followers of Christ have all the spiritual blessings in Christ.

Ephesians 1: 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Let me tell you about spiritual blessings.

Physical blessings are health and wealth which the world wants. But God has given us spiritual blessings and spiritual blessings is a much better blessing than physical blessings.

What is a spiritual blessing? A spiritual blessing coming from the word spirit which means “pneuma” where we get the word “pneumatic”, “pneumonia”, it simply means, breath or air. **The word spirit means, even though you don’t see it, you know it’s there. Examples of spiritual blessing is love, joy, peace, happiness, contentment** This is the reason why spiritual blessing is much better than material blessings. It’s because you might have all the material blessings in the world but if you don’t have love, joy or peace in your life...the material blessing is a curse rather than a blessing.

This is the reason why people want wealth and health. They’re thinking that if I’m rich or if I’m healthy, I will be content or happy or have peace.

BUT IT IS GOD WHO GIVES THESE THINGS AND IS ALREADY AVAILABLE TO THE CHURCH IN CHRIST

Now part of our blessings in our church is that God has given us privileges.

What’s a privilege?

“a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.” – Oxford Dictionary

Example :

“I had the privilege to fly first class even though I can’t afford it”

“I had the privilege to serve in the Prime Minister’s office.”

“I had the privilege to pass the test even though I did not study.”

“I had the privilege to sit front row in a Manny Pacquiao fight in Vegas”

Paul said,

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me:

Even though he did not deserve it, God has given this to Paul by His grace. This means he considers himself privileged.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHURCH

I. IN CHRIST, WE ARE AGENTS OF GOD'S SALVATION

8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ,

Illustration :

Usually, we hear sometimes that a sack of rice is on sale in the grocery and we share it with fellow Filipinos. But what if you know one grocery chain is giving away sacks of rice for free. It will always be free. Just go to the grocery store, get the sack of rice and you don't have to pay for it. I'm pretty sure that word will go around the Filipino community fast.

Or you found out that Philippine Airlines will fly any Canadian with Filipino heritage for free to go back and forth to the Philippines anytime they want and they have added 5 flights a day, 7 days a week to do this. Wouldn't we share that with fellow Filipinos here in Canada?

Or let's say, you know of a medicine that can cure cancer or diabetes by just popping one pill and it will be gone. Wouldn't share that with people who have cancer or diabetes?

Beloved of Christ, we already have the cure for sin that gives us access to God and all the spiritual blessings that comes with it and will save us from the depths of hell and enjoy the glories of God and heaven for eternity – the cure, the source of spiritual blessings and the way to God our Father is Jesus Christ.

QUOTE : THE CHURCH HAS MOST IMPORTANT GOOD NEWS OF ALL AND WE ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE PRIVILEGE TO SPREAD IT. Is there are any other news better than that?

Brothers and sisters, it is our privilege to share Jesus Christ to the people around us when given the chance.

This is the reason why we share this news to others.

We are the agents of God's salvation through Christ. God has chosen each and everyone of us to share this news to others.

II. IN CHRIST, WE ACCOMPLISH GOD'S INTENTION

v.10 a "His intent was that now, through the church

What is the intention?

^oHis intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

a.) The church shows God's manifold wisdom

Etymology :

manifold "polypoikilos" many different colors
wisdom "Sophia"

SO what does "manifold wisdom" mean? It's the different "colors" or "sides" of God's wisdom.

When you think of the word "manifold", just translate it to "many folds".

Illustration : Remember how our grandmothers doesn't have wallet or a purse. She has a cloth with many folds on it which she keeps in her breast. So when she's giving us money she will pull this out and "unfold" the many folds.

Speaking of cloths, do you remember the "shamwow" commercial?

Shamwow infomercial showing the different (multi-purpose) use of the product plus how durable it is plus how many shamwows you can have at a certain price.

Manifold wisdom means, there's a lot of amazing and wonderful sides in God's wisdom that you can discover.

Question : To whom does God show His manifold wisdom?

"...to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose..."

In short : Angels

A.) rulers and authorities - "arche" principalities and "exousia" powers
They are categorized - Archangels, Cherubims, Seraphims, Angels

B.) This verse shows that angels are watching the church (whether they be angels of God or the fallen angels). They are intently watching the church.

Sample : Luke 15:10 - Angels are watching when one receives salvation

1 Corinthians 11:10 - Angels are concerned if a woman submits to her husband in church

1 Timothy 5:21 - Angels are watching if we and how we apply discipline in church

Hebrews 1:14 - Angels are sent forth when we need ministering

Of course, fallen angels : 1 Peter 5:8 watching us like a " your enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Relevance : It means that we are part of the grand scheme of things. This is why I love the church.

Question : Why make it known to the angels? Because they are the ones who are seeing these things unfold from the perspective of eternity.

How can I explain this? O Holy Spirit, allow me to make this simple.

1. Remember, angels are also created beings. It means they are NOT omniscient. It means they don't know everything. They can only see it as it unfolds.
2. But they were created before man was created. (that's the reason why, Satan was already there to tempt man when Adam was created)
3. So when man sinned against God, knowing who God is (He is Holy and Just but also Loving and Merciful), they are also watching how God would resolve this.

THAT'S WHY?

..., the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Question : How is God's manifold wisdom accomplished in Christ?

A short theological discourse of God's manifold wisdom in salvation. This is the full gospel.

1. Man was created in His own image and likeness and to have an intimate relationship with Him.
2. Sin destroyed that.
3. Since He is a Holy and Just God, He can't have a relationship with a sinner and has to punish the sinner (the punishment is death)
4. But God is also a God of love and mercy. He loves the sinner and wants to restore that relationship
5. **Dilemma.** Look...
 - a.) If God just punishes the sinner, He is compromising His nature of being a God of love and mercy.
 - b.) If God doesn't punish the sinner, He is compromising His nature of being God who is Holy and just.
6. **Solution :**
Somebody has to take that punishment – A substitute
7. **Problem again**
 - a.) He can't choose a man to die for a fellow man for they are just both sinners. (what does that mean, when a man dies, that's the punishment for himself. That man can't go back to life again and die for another man)
 - b.) God can take the punishment Himself since first He is holy and He is eternal, in short, He can die for the whole mankind. But the problem is He is eternal and someone who is eternal cannot die.
8. **Solution : WISDOM**
God became man (Christ Jesus) and He as the God-man died for our sins.

9. **In short, God's holiness and justice has been satisfied by our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Son of God**, very God Himself who died on the cross for us.. But God's love and mercy is also seen on the cross.

QUOTE : GOD'S JUSTICE AND LOVE ARE SATISFIED BY CHRIST THROUGH THE CROSS.

That's why the Bible says :

1 Corinthians 1:24 Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

FULL GOSPEL SHOWS Manifold Wisdom : It doesn't end there (here's the full gospel), since God wants to have an intimate relationship with man, the death of Christ also accomplished the establishing of our relationship with Him.

11. **And here's the true meaning of being born again** : *John 3:3 says, "...no one can see the kingdom of heaven unless he is born again."* It means, do you have a new nature?

How can you have a new nature? When the Spirit of God is in you. You can only have the Spirit of God when you receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

"He who has the Son has life, He who does not have the Son of God does not have life" 1 John 5:12

12. **TODAY we can have an intimate relationship with God because of this colourful thing again** : We have the Son of God in us, that's why we can have a relationship with God as our Father. We have God in us so anytime we have access to Him.

Wow : So you see, this is what the angels are watching how God is unfolding His manifold wisdom through the church.

Apply : And if you are thinking that you are unimportant, this will take out your notion.

Important : And do you know what else they're looking at? Remember, that they are spirit beings but they don't have the Spirit of Christ in them. **We have the Spirit of Christ in us. They are looking how that works out through a Christian.**

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

Apply : They're looking how the Spirit of Christ works out when we are undergoing suffering, how we relate to one another in peace and conflict, in praising and of course **ON HOW WE RELATE TO GOD** using the Spirit of Christ.

Note : It is through the church that God shows His manifold wisdom to the

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord

III. IN CHRIST, WE HAVE ACCESS TO GOD'S THRONE

"In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

Why did we have access to God's throne?

"In him

It is because of our Lord Jesus Christ. God hears our prayers not because we are good but because of Jesus Christ.

How did we gain access to God's throne?

through faith in him

It's because we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

That's why Jesus said in

John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Why can we approach God with freedom and confidence?

It's because He is our Father.

Illustration : (show photo) I love those photos of John F. Kennedy Jr. playing under the desk of John F. Kennedy in the oval office. John F. Kennedy was the President of the United States and his son is playing under his table. In order to enter the White House, you have to go through security checks and only a few privileged people can go into the Oval Office but JFK Jr can come in anytime, freely...confidently. WHY? IT'S BECAUSE THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS HIS FATHER.

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

THAT'S WHY PAUL SAID IN VERSE 13

"I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory."

Paul was saying, it's such a privilege to have done this even if the result is suffering.

CONCLUSION

- 1. THE CHURCH HAS THE HIGHEST PRIVILEGE.** We have that opportunity to be intimate with God through Christ. When you are serving others in church, that's such a privilege because you are serving the King of Kings. When we are singing and worshipping in church, we are singing to the Lord of Lords. I
- 2. THE CHURCH HAS THE HIGHEST CALLING.** We are providing a way for people to have that access to God through Christ.

Illustration : THIS IS THE REASON WHY IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO BE PART OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.

People read in the newspaper that the President would attend Riverview church. There was a typo mistake in the newspaper which should have read Riverside church. So there was an unusually big crowd that morning in the church and it was standing room only. The service starts at 10:30 a.m. and obviously the President wasn't there. So the pastor stood up to start the service.

While he was about to start, someone from the congregation interrupted and said, "Pastor, what time is the President coming? Shouldn't we wait for him?" The pastor replied, "I don't know what you're talking about but the God of the Universe is here so I'm pretty sure it's ok for us to begin our worship service."

S.G.D.