

# RICH *in* GRACE

## *Sermon Series in Ephesians*

**Preparing for Small Group:** Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
- (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
- (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
- (4) What does God want me to know?
- (5) What does God want me to do?

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### **“Called to the Mission”**

*Ephesians 3:1-13*

**Main Point:** God’s call to the mission means living on mission to the very end of the mission.

*Realities related to the call to the mission:*

**The call to the mission is risky business that’s worth the risk (1-6, 13).**

- *To participate in the most important work in the history of the world.*
- *To bring glory to God in His work through faithful obedience to His work.*

What Paul began to say in verse 1, he doesn’t actually complete until he picked back up on his prayer purpose in verse 14. However, the digression that Paul made in verses 1b-13 wasn’t insignificant. In fact, what he discussed in his digression was fundamental. In these verses, Paul shared some important realities about his call to the mission, which in turn reinforced the importance of unity in the church and related the heart of the call to the mission for the church, coming from the heart of this pioneer church planter. *One thing that we see is that the mission is risky business!* Paul was a prisoner in Rome for Christ, and he was suffering because of his work that led to many churches being planted all across Asia Minor. Paul’s condition was a reminder that the work of the gospel was risky work; however, Paul’s focus wasn’t on his condition as much as it was on the importance and worth of the mission that put him in the condition that he was in there in Rome. In verses 1-6, Paul reminded the believers that the work he had been called to was incredibly important work! God’s plan to redeem people from every nation wasn’t a mystery, but God’s plan in Christ to establish the church as one body, Jew and Gentile, had been a mystery. The very fact that Paul was willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel and the work of building unity in the church was evidence of the importance of the mission. Together, their faithful obedience brought glory to God.

1. Discuss what you know about the history of Paul’s sufferings as documented in the New Testament. Was this his first time to be arrested and to suffer for the work of the gospel? Why did he keep going? Does this still happen today? Why, and how?
2. Discuss the “mystery” that Paul talks about in these verses. What does this mystery tell us about the importance of the church? What does it reveal about the significance of unity in the church? If this is the case, why is there so much disunity in the visible church today?
3. What does having a historical perspective of God’s work and plan of redemption matter to bringing significance to the work of the mission today? How do we do this as the church?
4. Pray for faithfulness to the mission, despite the risks, for the glory of God in the church.

### **The call to the mission is only by the grace of God for the work of God (7-12).**

- *To proclaim the gospel to all people.*
- *To promote unity in the church for the witness of the church.*

Paul went on to talk about his call to bring the gospel to the nations, which is still the call of the church until Christ returns. The first thing that Paul emphasized was that his call was completely by the grace of God. In other words, Paul knew that he didn't deserve God's grace in his salvation nor did he deserve God's grace in his call to the mission. God selected Paul to bring the gospel to the Gentiles even though Paul was the last one who deserved this privilege in God's work. God chose Paul to proclaim God's grace in building the church from every tribe, nation, and language, even though Paul had been the most loyal of Jews in Israel. Paul's call to the mission was the call of the church in the mission. Paul was called to lead the church in obedience to the call of Jesus to make disciples of every nation. Paul was called to lead the church in promoting and protecting God's design for disciples from every nation to become one in Christ as the church. He was called to promote unity of the church because of the importance of unity in the church, knowing that the church was God's plan to witness to all of creation about the validity of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Ultimately, Paul had boldness and confidence in the mission — and reminded the church they did too — because the mission of Jesus was God's eternal plan of redemption for His people. So even as a prisoner in Rome, Paul knew that his work for the Lord had not been and would not be in vain.

1. Discuss God's grace in Paul's call. How does that apply to your life and your call today? Does the basic missionary call of Jesus apply to every follower of Jesus? Can the specifics of that call differ? How does the evidence from Scripture answer these questions?
2. Is the church called to proclaim the gospel to all peoples? What does that look like for our church and for your small group? What is your call in that mission?
3. Why is unity in the church so important? Read the prayer of Jesus in John 17, and discuss.
4. What are some common, invalid reasons for disunity in the church? How can we guard against these things? Pray for healthy unity in the church for the mission of the church.

### **The call to the mission brings challenge and encouragement in the work of the mission (13).**

Paul ended this important digression on his call to the mission by encouraging the believers to not be discouraged by his present suffering. He was suffering for them because his arrest was the result of both his missionary work, which led to churches being planted in Asia Minor, as well as his ecclesiological work of unifying the Jews and Gentiles in the church, which had only intensified the hatred of the Jewish leaders towards Paul. As a result, Paul knew that the faith of the believers may be challenged by his sufferings. The work of the mission wasn't easy, and challenges like dealing with Paul's suffering were a reality. However, in the midst of that suffering, there was also encouragement. Paul reminded the believers that his suffering was actually for their glory! How could this be? Simply put, Paul's suffering legitimized the important work of God in the early church. Paul's suffering testified to the church that they were worth it and that what God was doing in and through them was the very mission and work of God. Today, the work of the mission still brings challenges, and an eternal perspective will bring encouragement even in the face of those challenges. The work of the mission is worth it!

1. Have you ever seen good people go through bad things while serving the Lord? Has this ever challenged you in the work of the mission? Apply Paul's perspective to those situations.
2. Have you ever found yourself in a place of losing heart in the work of the church? If so, why? How did you find encouragement in that situation? Do you need encouragement today? Share, and encourage one another in the Lord.
3. What can you learn from Paul about encouraging each other in the mission?