

Eye Has Not Seen

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INTRODUCTION:

Mission is not something that the church is to do on the side. Mission is what the church *is*. Every Christian church is a mission church. Every Christian is in some sense, at some level, a missionary. But we must understand this rightly. We should not take it to mean that every Christian must exercise the same gifts—if we were to do that, where would Paul’s teaching on body life be? But we are to understand the entire body, taken together, is a missionary. The church *is* mission.

THE TEXT:

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

This text is a summary statement of what we read in Isaiah 64:4. “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, Neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, What he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.” (Is. 64:4).

In the immediate context, Paul tells us what he is talking about. He refers explicitly to the meaning of what he is saying. “Howbeit we speak . . .” (v. 6). “But we speak the wisdom of God . . .” (v. 7). The wisdom he is talking about is the wisdom that God ordained before the world for our *glory* (v. 7). The princes of this world did not recognize the plan—if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of *glory*. Then we have our text, which says “eye has not seen.” This is followed immediately by the assertion that these unseen, unheard things have been revealed to us by the Spirit, the same Spirit who searches the deep things of God. We have not received the spirit of this world, but rather the Spirit which is of God, so that we might know the things *that are freely given to us of God* (v. 12). We have the mind of Christ (v. 16).

GLORY ACCOMPLISHED AND APPLIED:

We cannot understand mission unless we understand glory, and this means understanding glory in both its stages. The old blues song says that “everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die.” Resurrection is not a possibility for those who will not die. The way to the crown is through the cross. Before the crown of rejoicing we must first have the crown of thorns. But both of these realities are glorious. In order to see where it *goes*, I must first see what it *is*.

Glory applied is glory manifested. Incipient glory is glory that only faith can see—and we only see it because God has revealed the glory of the cross to us. The glory of the

cross is one thing, and the glory of the resurrection is its necessary culmination. These are two stages or degrees of glory, and the second one rests upon the first and is entirely dependent upon it. Jesus, speaking of the cross, said that He had come to His hour of suffering, and there was an impulse to shrink from it. But He then asks the Father to glorify His name, which the Father promises to do (John 12:28). This He does in the cross. Jesus resisted the temptation *to shrink from His glory*. The body of Jesus—stripped, flogged, bloodied, mocked, spat upon—manifested the glory of God. It really does that, but God is not yet done. “And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified” (John 12:23).

What does Jesus say when Judas departs with treachery in his heart? “Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him” (John 13:31).

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (John 17:1).

If we want to see the manifest glory of a world ready for harvest, with the grain white unto harvest, then there will need to be centuries of plowing and cross-plowing. We must remove countless rocks from the field, and this will be done in the heat of the day and by the sweat of our brow. When we walk in imitation of Christ, this is an essential part of that imitation. Jesus prophesies for Peter what kind of death he would experience. Peter would put out his hands, someone else would gird him, and they would take him off to where he would not have gone himself. This would be an *inglorious* death. And Jesus said that it would *glorify* God (John 21:19).

We reverse the downward spiral of the world by first reversing the definition of glory. The death of Jesus, and imitative martyrdom and sacrifice, are God’s central instrument for subverting the world’s systems of *superficial* glory. A shrewd nonbeliever by common grace might be able to see part of this—hard sacrifice now, deferred gratification, will lead to prosperity later. He might be able to say *no pain, no gain*. He might be able to say *no guts, no glory*. But for the Christian, the prerequisites of glory are themselves glory.

PATHEtic MISSION:

Picture a settler on the frontier. He has cleared ten acres of forest and built a cabin. He only has a third of the stumps out, and half the boulders. His settlement looks like a war zone. He receives a visit from his city cousin, who looks out at the grim landscape. What should the reply be if his cousin said, “You call that a corn field?” The man of faith smiles and says, “Yes, I do actually.”

Suppose a man’s wife is big pregnant and one day laments that she is “fat and bloated.” Should the husband reply with, “Yeah, you are, but the kid will be totally worth it.”? No, because wise Christians *see the glory now*.

No cross, no crown is not just a truism with regard to our individual sanctification. *No cross, no crown* applies to the whole church, and to the whole world as it becomes the whole church. The gospel not only deals with guilt, but it also, in a wonderful way, deals with guilt.

ARE WE THERE YET?

So do not despise the day of small beginnings (Zech. 4:10). A little yeast goes in the loaf, and it does not rise in five minutes (Matt. 13:13). The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It begins with the glory of trivial smallness and ends with the large glory of luxuriant foliage (Mark 4:31). It begins with stream of living water, barely enough to get your shoes wet, and ends by bringing life to the world (Ez. 47:1). It begins as a small rock, not cut with human hands, but growing to become a mountain that fills the earth (Dan. 2:35).

And as we learn not to despise small beginnings, we also learn to not despise contemptible beginnings. Why? Because they are *glorious*.

BUT WE SEE JESUS:

It is easy to become discouraged when confronted with another day of exhausting labor, and an apparent inability to get people to look up and see the way God intends for it to be—and the way it will be someday. We do not yet see all things in subjection to Him (Heb. 2:8). *But we see Jesus*(Heb. 2:9). He went through the suffering of death and is now crowned with glory and honor—and no servant is greater than his master.

What is He doing? He is bringing *many sons to glory* (Heb. 2:10). And this is the way He loves to do it—from one kind of glory to the other.



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