

Ephesians 3:1-6, Part 3

0199

The true expression of Jesus on earth is this New Humanity, a New Humanity in which by faith, all are given all the Kingdom.

The book of Acts is the story of two worlds colliding. And in that collision, is this turmoil, turmoil over Gentiles who are believing. And they just don't know what to do with this. And so then there's this big ruckus in chapter 15. You remember, at the beginning of chapter 15, it's described as no small dissension. That's Luke's way of saying this was a massive argument because they couldn't understand how to process this, that the Holy Spirit was coming to people in the same way who weren't Jews as he was coming to those who were Jews.

So they had this big meeting. And James's was presiding over the meeting. Finally, Peter stands up. And Peter says, listen, brothers, we saw with our own eyes, the Holy Spirit was pleased to fall upon Gentiles, in the same way that he fell upon us. And they, too, were speechless. And they said, What can we say? Other than God is pleased to now save the Gentiles by faith, as he has saved us.

But the problem wasn't over the problem was just getting started. Every single church that Paul planted, every single one, struggled with the same problem. If you think back to years to when we were studying Philippians, you might remember the whole Judaizers remember that thing? Where every single church that Paul planted, the same thing happened, these believing Jews who believed in Jesus, they would come to this church to Paul started and start teaching them: listen, if you want salvation, Jesus is the Savior, and He wants to save you. But he can't save you until you do the things that we've been doing. Because we're God's favorite people. And what makes us God's favorite people are all these things that we do, the ordinances that we keep the dietary laws that we keep the sacrifices that we make. That's what makes us God's favorite people, something about us makes us his favorite. And we want you to be too. So all you need to do is circumcision, and three times a year ago to give the sacrifices in Jerusalem.

Remember Paul's response to that whole thing? Paul did not say, you know that that's really deficient theology. Let me, I'll come back around and another mountain. Let me work that out with you—no. Paul said that's a denial of the gospel. Paul didn't say, we need to straighten out your theology. Paul said that is a denial of the gospel because Paul understood that salvation by faith necessarily puts all of those who have saving faith on the same footing with God.

This is why he says to the Gentiles, there is neither Greek nor slave, barbarian, nor Scythian, man nor woman, we are all one in Christ. This was the major issue of the entire early church period. This issue of well, in case this sounds foreign to us, does it sound a little bit foreign? Are you sort-of thinking in your mind: this kind of interesting, but no, I don't know any believing Jews. So it's really just sort of

theoretical. If it sounds that way, here's the crux of the issue. The crux of the issue is the nature of grace. The crux of the issue is really: is it really true that by grace, you have been saved through faith? And this is not your own doing that is the gift of God not a result of work so that no one may boast? Is that really true? If it is, then all are one in Christ, necessarily so. And so this is really a struggle with grace, isn't it? Which is the defining attribute of the kingdom of God? Why did Jesus tell so many parables about grace do you think? Remember the parable of the prodigal son? The parable of the prodigal son is a parable about grace. It is a parable about those who think that they have despite what Paul says in Ephesians eight, verse Ephesians, two verses eight through 10. Despite that, they think that they do have reason for boasting. So you remember the older brother, right? The younger the younger son takes the money and goes and squanders it, the older son stays home and works. The younger son comes home, the father welcomes him home, and the older brothers peeved.

I was here the whole time. I never left. In other words, I deserve more than him. Now you've welcomed him back with full sonship. I never left. I deserve more than he. Do you see what Jesus is saying? Even before that became the issue, Jesus is telling us, this is what the issue is. There will be those who feel as though their obedience to the law, their keeping of the ordinances, their ritualistic practices, their ethnic identity, all of those things, put them in a place where they're just a little bit above some others in the Body.

Or remember the Parable of the Vineyard, the workers in the vineyard? Some work all day, some work just the last hour of the day when the temperatures are cool. And then the owner comes and gives them all the same payment. And then the whole point is the ones who worked all day said, "Wait a minute, you gave us the same, same as you gave them." And the owner says, "Well, I paid you what I told you, I'd pay you. I've not, I've not done—I've kept my word. And the point is, they felt like they deserved more. Yet, Jesus's point is, this is the nature of the kingdom. That's how he said—that's how he introduces the parable, the kingdom of heaven may be thought of in this way. The Kingdom of Heaven is a kingdom of grace. And grace is not a comfortable thing. And so there will be these who do feel like that their standing their position is higher or more privileged. And this is kind of the whole, the whole point. This is the most offensive aspect of the gospel of the new humanity.

One last illustration, I think this will really kind of bring it home. So here's Paul, fast forward now a couple of chapters in the book of Acts, Acts chapter 21, Paul is on the final missionary journey that the book of Acts relates for us. And the problem between the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles is not better, it's worse. And so Paul wants to do something to alleviate this. And he sees the perfect opportunity. The perfect opportunity was there was this famine in Jerusalem. And the believing Jews in Jerusalem were hurting, they were starving, they didn't have food, they didn't have money.

And so Paul sees this, and he says, here's the perfect opportunity, we can take a collection for those brothers, and this collection will come from the Gentile believers. And maybe this will get through to the hearts of those Jewish believers in in Jerusalem. So he goes around to all the churches, sends these letters ahead, saying make sure you've gotten your collection all taken up. When I get there, I don't want to have to wait for it. I'm going to take this collection back to Jerusalem. So he does this, he takes the collection back to Jerusalem thinking, this will help the situation. He gets back to Jerusalem. He's talking there with James and James saying to him, Look, the problem is really worse than you thought it

was. There are those here, who are they profess Christ, but they really are not happy with you. They think that you're going around teaching believing Jews to stop practicing the laws of Moses.

So he says, really, I don't think that this offering—is thoughtful and is loving, and it's kind as it is—I really don't think that's going to do it. I've got another idea, Paul, there's four, there's four Jews here, four Jewish boys here and they are taking a vow. They're doing this vow, this type of special Jewish bow where they shave their head and they give these special sacrifices in the temple. And so they say, Paul, why don't you do this now that you're here, why don't you: number one, take the vow with them, and number two, sponsor them—meaning by their sacrifices for them and stuff. And maybe that gesture, that's a very, very Jewish thing to do. Maybe that'll help.

So Paul does that. They go into the temple, they make their sacrifices. Paul comes out of the temple with these four Jewish boys. And the crowd seizes, the crowd who doesn't like Paul, they see him coming out of the temple. And one of them shouts out hey, there's Paul. You know what? Two days ago I saw Paul with that fella Trophimus, remember Trophimus was an Ephesian Christian, a Gentile Christian. We saw Paul with Trophimus. He just brought Trophimus out of the temple, which he didn't. And that was just like throwing a match onto a powder keg. Boom.

The crowd starts beating Paul in the street. The Roman Tribune shows up, rescues Paul by putting him in chains. And he's trying to get to the bottom of this whole situation. And what's going on, what? What did they do? Who are you? Who are you? And then, and he starts to figure this out. And Paul says, Let me speak to the crowd. Let me let me speak to the crowd. And so Paul stands up, motions for everybody to be quiet. And then he begins speaking in Hebrew. That's a very Jewish thing to do, because they didn't even speak Hebrew at that point, they're speaking Aramaic. So he's speaking in the language of the Scriptures. Again, Paul's trying to just, he's trying to put some salve on this wound.

So he starts speaking in Hebrew, and he's gonna give his story, he's gonna give his testimony about how he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, this Pharisee teacher, the greatest Pharisee teacher of his day, and how he was a Pharisee of Pharisees, and how he persecuted the church, and on and on, and he talks about the Damascus Road experience and how Jesus found him on the Damascus Road knocks him off his horse, bright light, a voice from heaven, all this sort of thing. And Luke tells us that the crowd is speechless, you could hear a pin drop...until Paul said one thing, and that one thing that he said, was what the voice of Jesus said to him, and Acts chapter 22, "Go for I will send you far away to the Gentiles. Up to that word, they listened to him, then they raised their voices and said away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live."

That that was the powder keg. Do you see how that was, that was the raw nerve, the raw nerve that this man is going to tell Gentiles that, by faith, they have the same thing we have. We're okay with Gentiles being saved. And we're really okay with Gentiles being saved, as long as they kind of do what we do, and follow in our footsteps and recognize we were the first. We're not okay with Gentiles being told: by faith, you have the full kingdom.

And this is the this is the mystery that's now revealed. This is, this is what Jesus prayed for. In John chapter 17, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word that

they may all be one just as you father are in Me and I in you.” So Jesus is praying on the night of his arrest, he is praying that his kingdom would be this oneness, this sameness, this togetherness, whose example is the Trinity.

We were talking earlier about the Trinity, the Trinity, is the example. You want to you want to think about what Jesus wants his kingdom on earth to be what Jesus wants his church to be, what is this new humanity to be? Look at the Trinity. The Trinity is our example. The oneness, the unity, the togetherness of the Trinity, is what Jesus says. That's the example of what New Humanity on earth should look like. And that's the very thing that was so difficult for them to accept. This oneness, this togetherness, this being infused into the Body of Christ, having the same privileges and the same graces and the same blessings, as those who, at least diligently tried to keep the law, or those who for so many years thought of themselves as being in a privileged position with God. This oneness, this togetherness, is the New Humanity. The expression of Jesus Christ on earth is this New Humanity.

Let me say that again: the true expression of Jesus on earth is this New Humanity, a New Humanity in which by faith, all are given all of the kingdom.

Following Christ is not a private experience. Being put into Christ necessarily means being put into his body, there is no other option. Following Christ is not an individual experience. Is there a way that we could take Paul's words, through the second half of chapter two and into chapter three, is there a way that we can take his words and find any kind of any kind of sense to the idea of being put into Christ without being put into this New Humanity? Is there any way that that makes sense? That there is some way of being put into Christ without being put into this oneness, the sameness this togetherness, this new humanity. No. This is, in Paul's words, the true expression of Jesus Christ here on earth is this idea of this New Humanity that were put into, all of us put into it, by grace through faith, and once being put into it, we are recipients of the entire kingdom. We are recipient recipients of all of God's graces, as Paul began in chapter one, verse three, “In Christ are all the blessings in the heaven places.”

The New Testament would consider one who would think of being put into Christ, without being put into the New Humanity, the new, the new testament would consider that some sort of an aberration, kind of like an eyeball without a body, right? Because that's what the New Testament calls us, right? We are members of the Body of Christ. And so in the same way that that a disembodied hand is an aberration, the New Testament would consider the one who believes that they are put into Christ without also being put into the new humanity also, would be an aberration. The New Testament knows nothing of that, because we are the New Humanity at the true expression of Jesus Christ on earth.

Secondly, if your view of being put into Christ is primarily of the individual level, you will to one degree or another, sooner or later, begin to regard the Church as an optional addition. Let me say that again, if your primary view, if your fundamental understanding of being put into Christ begins with something individual, is rooted in something individual, if that governs your perception of what being put into Christ is, is something that's individualistic. Sooner or later, to one degree or another, you will begin to see the New Humanity, which is the Church of Jesus Christ to be something that's optional. Something that's added on something that benefits, but something that's not necessary, there is no other way to go. If your understanding of being put into Christ is simply individual, then the church will be optional for you.

You may find it very helpful, you may find it extremely beneficial. But you will think of the Church as where you need to go to get what you need to live this life. Now, does the church give what you need to live this life? Absolutely, it does. But that's not the main purpose of the Church. The central purpose of the Church is not, as Paul is gonna say in chapter four, to equip you to live this life well. It does that. That's not it's central purpose.

What did Paul just say the central purpose of the church is? The central purpose of the church is to be the expression of Jesus Christ here. This new humanity is here. We exist in order to be the true expression of Jesus here in a fallen world. In such a way, that when the world looks at the oneness and the togetherness, of the New Humanity, that is the only true genuine expression of Jesus here on Earth.

And those aren't my words, is that not what Paul's saying? That this new Man, this oneness, this newness, this is Christ's expression of Himself here.

Now, chapter four, five, and six, are going to give us that equipping, that says, Listen, this, when you come to Church, this is what the Church is here to do. There's apostles and preachers and teachers and all these different offices, and their role is to equip you to do the work of the ministry. Yes. But Paul begins by saying: This is what the Church is, the Church is the true and genuine expression of Jesus Christ here on Earth.

Now, lastly, the last point I'll make and then we'll be done. In order to see this, let's look down to verse nine. Verse eight, "To me, although I was the least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone. What is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things."

And that's a mouthful, we'll have to sort of take that apart as we get to it. But what Paul here is saying at the very minimum, what he is saying is that this New Humanity, this oneness in which Jew and Gentile—think back to last week we talked about all the deep animosity and the deep hatred from last week—that hatred has been put aside. And we're not talking about people that get along now. We're not talking about people that just are able to worship together in the same Church, maybe share a meal together. We're talking about people who have been made one with each other, they've been fused together to a new humanity. Jesus—or Paul here says, that is what shows the world the wisdom of God.

When the world wants to see the wisdom of God, Paul says, look to the New Humanity, look to the Church, that's where you'll see it. When you see how God has fused together into a new, a New Humanity, those who were had nothing in common. Those who had completely different backgrounds, those who spoke different languages, those who had no common hobbies, those who were completely in fact—earthly enemies, and the Gospel has taken those and put them together in that way. That's what the world sees when they see Christ, when they look to see Christ. Look to the Church. And that's how you see Christ.

So that our togetherness, our oneness is how the world sees Jesus. In such a way that is not possible to show the world a true and genuine expression of Jesus, without the togetherness of his new humanity. Because that oneness, and that togetherness, that being knit together into a new humanity, Paul was saying that that's the glory of Christ right there. And apart from that, apart from that, that's not the glory of Christ, that's not showing the world Christ.

That is not even a true expression of Christ in you. Because the expression of Christ Jesus says, Remember John 13:34 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you, and by this, all people will know." They'll know who I am. They'll know me they'll know you by your love for each other.