

LIVING TO PURPOSE — PART 2 THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

We said last month that God has a *purpose*, that God's purpose is *in Christ*, that God is working out His purpose, and that God includes *us* in His purpose. It's in the purpose of God that the Church finds its purpose; and it's in the purpose of the Church that we as individuals find our purpose. So we started with the purpose of God, and saw it in Ephesians 1:10 "... *to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*" In the light of this, we concluded that *our* part, that is, the purpose of the *church*, is three-fold:

1. To be under the Head ourselves
2. To be together *as a people* under one Head
3. To seek to promote the Lordship of Christ, the Kingdom of God, the Headship of Jesus so that more and more people—and more and more *of* people—would be brought together under the Head.

This month, we'll look at these three points in more detail.

To be a people personally under one Head

Years ago Len Magee sang,

If you want God to do something, then what's He supposed to do?

Don't you know to end it all, He'll have to start with you?

Many are quick to say, "The Church should be more *committed!*" — or more *friendly*, or more *encouraging*, or more *passionate*. But if I'm taking responsibility (rather than simply complaining), it has to start with me. *I* have to be more committed, friendly, encouraging or passionate. I have to be more "under the Head".

We typically receive Jesus on board our train, honour Him as our valued guest, show Him to His compartment and say, "rule there". And in doing so, we miss the point. "*For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*" (Col 3:3). It's not that we take Him into *our* life, but that we lose our life *in Him* — now we're summed up in Christ. Rather than being "Lord of our spiritual compartment", He wants to fill the whole train and direct the engine! Rather than living compartmentalised lives, He wants us to flow in life out of the central place of who we are *in Him*.

We say, "Jesus is Lord!" But how much is He Lord? Perhaps He is Lord of our "spiritual aspects". Is He Lord of our job, our family, our marriage, our finances, and our entertainment? Is He Lord of our conversation, our time, our decision-making, our private thoughts, our actions, and our reactions? Is He 20%, or 50%, or 80% Lord? If so, He's not Lord. Is He 99% Lord? If so, He's still not Lord! Why? Because we choose the 1% that is off-limits to Him.

It's *not* that we must start out with 100% perfection or nothing. But we make a commitment to obey now, with all our imperfections, and to respond in obedience when He gives further revelation or correction or conviction. It's an on-going commitment as we continue to live up to the light we have.

To be a people together under one Head

We are the Body of Christ. We are members of Him and therefore members of one another. We're connected to and flowing in life that comes from the Head; and yet at the same time we're released and functioning in fruitful ministry — the many-membered Body growing to maturity.

The goal is to be other-centred, as opposed to being self-centred (see 1 Cor 10:24). Thus the focus is off "what's in it for me?", and on to bigger issues; not evaluating on the basis of

personal taste and personal benefit, but seeking the common good and the plan of God for us together.

We're called on to be like-minded, one in spirit and purpose, to consider others better than ourselves, to look out for the interests of others (Phil 2:1-4). We're *now* to be the showcase Church (Eph 3:10), modelling a righteous alternative in the world.

To be together and in it together is one thing. But there's also the aspect of being *under one Head*. When we as members of the Body operate in independence, "doing our own thing" — either inappropriate activity or activity at inappropriate times — we weaken and dilute the effectiveness of the Body. If the Head says, "walk", but the left hand decides to *swim*, the walking may be less effective, particularly through narrow doorways! A human body in which a specific part did what the brain had not told it to do, or what the brain had told it *not* to do, would generally be considered to have a disability. We must not act in such a way as to disable the Body of Christ — we must be *together under one Head*.

To promote and proclaim the Lordship of Christ, the Kingdom of God, the Headship of Jesus so that more and more people—and more and more of people—will be brought together under one Head

This starts with *evangelism*. Looked at from any angle, it's why we're here.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Jn 3:16

God our Saviour ... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim 2:3,4

The Lord is ... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Pet 3:9

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations Mt 24:14

We need to preach the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus (Acts 8:12; 28:31).

But if we want to be Biblical, we should not be content with words alone — in addition we need "Kingdom demonstration" (see for example 1 Cor 2:4). We should proclaim with accompanying signs, in a wide understanding. This would include healings and miracles and signs and wonders, but also gifts of the Spirit (Heb 2:4), acts of love and kindness, and lives that model Kingdom truth (1 Jn 3:18).

It starts with evangelism, but it's not *just* evangelism. It's not just the first response of the lost, but also the *continuing* response of believers. Not all that calls itself "the church" in fact *is* the church. But much of it is — and we must have a concern for the *whole* Church. Some of that Church is well taught and must be called to obedience! Some of it is so mistaught or untaught that it doesn't know any better. We need to get the Word out to the *Church* as well as to the lost. We need the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). We must therefore teach, train, provoke, challenge, exhort. We must increase our response to the Lord's Headship *qualitatively* as well as quantitatively.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. Col 1:28

In the light of this, next month we'll look at "Pointers to Personal Purpose".

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