

- C. Gospel outreach is a missional priority because it reminds us that we must look beyond ourselves to those we are called to *bless*.

Conclusion

“Recovering the missionary nature of the church is urgent because this is what the church is in its biblical identity. If the church is to faithfully be the church of the New Testament, it must be a missionary body. This is not an optional extra or something that might enrich the church.... Nor is this a formula for growth or success.” (Goheen & Sheridan, *Becoming a Missionary Church*)

LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- How does the creation story show God’s desire to bless humanity? What changed that?
- When did God begin to rectify the world, such that it could be blessed rather than cursed? Explain.
- In Genesis 12:1-3, what are the 3 things God tells Abram?
- How significant is Abraham’s calling to bless the world to the rest of the story of his life? What role would Abraham play in this calling?
- Exodus 19:4-6 show Israel’s calling to participate in this call. Why is this relevant to us as believers and our call?
- In what sense did Israel fail in its calling? In what way did it succeed?
- What might you conclude from the fact that the great commission tells us what to do with converts (make disciples), but doesn’t tell us how to get converts?
- What might we learn from the early church about fulfilling the great commission?
- What does it mean to say the modern church has, in many ways, swallowed a gnostic gospel? How might the whole gospel inform our call to bless all peoples of the world?

Gospel Witness: Gospel Outreach

Jerry Cisar — February 5, 2023

Text: Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 28:16-20; Exodus 19:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Introduction

Christopher Wright: “It is not... that God has a mission for his church in the world, [but] that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God’s mission.” (The Mission of God, 62)

John Stott: “Mission arises *from the heart of God himself*, and is communicated from his heart to ours.” (Quoted in *The Mission of God’s People*.)

I. God’s Mission to Restore Blessing

- A. God on a blessing spree (Gen. 1).
- B. After Adam rebelled, the curse replaced the blessing (Gen. 3).
- C. God sets out to restore blessing to the world (Gen. 12:1-3).
 - i. Go be a blessing (12:1-2).
 - ii. Chosen for what?
 - a) *Chosen to participate in God’s mission to bless the world.*
 - b) *To bless is to undo the curse in people’s lives such that they can begin to flourish.*

II. Abram's Mission to Be a Blessing

- A. What does God say to Abram (12:1-3)?
 - i. He tells him to **go** (12:1).
 - ii. That he will be a blessing (2).
 - iii. The extent of this blessing. *every people group on earth* (3).
- B. Abraham's calling to bless the world remains central.
 - i. Gen. 18:17-19
 - ii. Gen. 22:15-18

Christopher Wright: "The important point to notice is the way God's intention to bless the nations is combined with human commitment *to a quality of obedience* that enables us to be the agent of that blessing."

III. Israel's Mission to Be a Blessing (Exo. 19:4-6)

- A. Israel was chosen to reach the rest of the world.

"You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, *for* all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exo. 19:5-6 ESV, emph. mine)

 - i. Israel's calling was a priestly calling... to mediate God's blessing to the rest of the world.
 - ii. Israel's obedience is essential to the task.
- B. Natural Israel failed because they began thinking of the nations as their enemies rather than as the objects of God's grace.

C. Isaiah's Vision (Isa. 2:2-5)

IV. Our Mission to Be a Blessing

- A. The Great Commission picks up on Abram's call to go and be a blessing to the nations. (Matt. 28:18-20)
 - i. The 3 elements in Abram's call are found here.
 - a) Go.
 - b) The extent: to all nations.
 - c) Be a blessing...
 - ii. It doesn't tell us how to get converts. It starts with baptism.

"According to Tertullian, the outsiders looked at the Christians and saw them energetically feeding poor people and burying them, caring for boys and girls who lacked property and parents, and being attentive to aged slaves and prisoners. They interpreted these actions as a 'work of love.' And they said, 'Vide, look! How they love one another'" (Kreider, 61).

- B. A Holy Priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9-12)
 - i. The church inherited Israel's priestly calling to bless the world.
 - ii. We must seek to bless our community.