

Hands - application

- Pray for churches around the world who experience the kind of persecution that the Ephesians did.
- Pray for mission partner Andrew White, the vicar of Baghdad. Check out <http://frme.org> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTCsP65cw8U> for updates.
- Perhaps share those things that are discouraging to you at the moment and claim in prayer the promise of v13 - that although there is suffering now, there is glory later.

Further notes

- Come along to hear Simon Guillebaud and Matt Stott talking about their missionary work with Muslims at St Mark's on Thursday 3rd.
- Get involved with Action Junction on the weekend of the 5th-6th July!



Spring 2014

1st July

Ephesians 3:1-13

Serving the Gospel

Background for leaders

This week we're continuing our series on Ephesians. Paul's letter was to the Christian church at Ephesus, in modern day Turkey.

The opening chapter and a half (from 1:1 - 2:10) is one long expression of praise and prayer at the good news of the Gospel. Paul explains what Christ has done for His people, and what the implications are before going on in the rest of the letter to encourage Christians in their response.

This Sunday, Marc Hearn explained the three reasons Paul gave for why the Ephesian church should stay encouraged during tough times - Paul's calling, the Ephesians' calling, and God's planning.

Even though their leader, Paul was suffering in prison, the gospel means that both he and the Ephesians were able to rejoice.

Conversation starters

- Paul, who had started the church in Ephesus was in prison as he wrote this letter to them. How would things change at St Mark's if Paul Perkin were imprisoned for preaching the gospel?
- What external influences in our society are the biggest discouragement to our faith today?

Head - context and culture

Read Ephesians 3:1-13 — discuss the passage

- How does this passage open and close? How does that help us understand Paul's theme in these verses?
v1 & 13 speak of his imprisonment - these verses are to encourage them.
- How does Paul describe his particular calling to the church?
Perhaps look up Acts 19:1-8, and Acts 20:17-38
- What is the mystery that he refers to in v4 and 6?
Check out Genesis 12:2-3 and Isaiah 49:6, 22. The mystery wasn't that the Gentiles would be included, but how. How have they been?
- How does v8 reveal Paul's sense of wonder at the mystery of the gospel? Why does he describe himself as "the least of all people?"
- What is the church's role to play in v10-13?
- God's sovereignty is the ultimate reason to remain confident in the face of trials. Where in this passage do we get this sense of God's plans?

Heart - what does this mean for us?

- The passage talks about the mystery of the gospel - are we regularly in awe at the wonder of the gospel?! If not, what can we learn from Paul?
- How are these verses able to encourage us in our 21st century trials?
- On Sunday, Marc said we must remember that "it's not about us, but also that it is about us". Why must it be both?