

# **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA**

## **Mission Impossible**

By

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*Mark 8:27-38*

Are there any here who remember the television series of a few years ago titled "Mission Impossible?" Every time I saw one of those exciting exploits of the "mission impossible" team I thought of the impossible mission of Jesus Christ.

One important difference between "Mission Impossible" and the impossible mission of Jesus Christ was the fact that he did not have a team that helped him with his mission. He had to work alone. As the scripture says, **O sing to the LORD a new song, For He has done wonderful things His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.** <sup>4</sup> **"For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come.** <sup>5</sup> **"I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me. Isa. 63:4-5; Psa. 98:1**

For those of you who never saw an episode of "Mission Impossible" let me brief you on the plot formula that was always used. Peter Graves played a man named Mr. Phelps. The plot usually started with Mr. Phelps getting secret instructions from a secret place, which only he had access to. He listened to a cassette tape that would self-destruct after he played it. Mr. Phelps was the only person who could get the game plan for the mission.

Mr. Phelps was a high government official but he always had to execute the mission under the cover of anonymity. The United States government sponsored the mission. Mr. Phelps then would be acting on behalf of his government but the nature of the mission was such that should he be captured or killed in the commission of the mission the Secretary would disavow any knowledge of his actions. The tape-recording always closed by wishing Phelps good luck if he decided to accept the mission.

So the mission was entirely voluntary. Phelps does not have to take the risk unless he wants to. Neither did any of the other team members.

Our Lord acted for the government of Almighty God -- and he came with anonymity. An angel did announce his birth and that he was both Savior and Lord to some shepherds tending their flocks. But apart from them and Mary and Joseph and a few other souls, none of whom were prominent people of the day, his coming was with anonymity.

We also know that Christ came on his mission without any coercion or compulsion. His coming to earth for his mission was entirely voluntary. The Father said to the Son, **'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. Psa. 2:8**

<sup>5</sup>**Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; <sup>6</sup> IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. <sup>7</sup> "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'" Heb. 10:5-7**

John the Baptist declared him to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and Christ gave ample personal testimony and evidence of him being the Messiah by his many miracles. But even so he did not have the backing or support of the official authorities of this world. In fact they disavowed him and tried to discredit him. He came on the business of heaven, the business of God Almighty but without any human government backing at all. They not only disavowed any confidence in who he was or why he came but they plotted to get rid of him by conspiring to have him put to death by crucifixion so as to put him to shame and discredit him with all the people.

The most important thing about each "mission impossible" mission was what had to be done. You needed to tune in at the beginning of each episode to hear the taped explanation of the purpose of the mission. If you missed that you really didn't know why or what was going on in the unfolding drama. But if you understood the need and the purpose of the mission, then you could get caught up in the thrill and excitement of seeing the cleverness of the IM Force and the daring and courage they employed to execute their mission. But you never knew until the mission was successfully completed just how everything fit together so perfectly.

The mission was usually to rescue someone held captive by some sinister force, or to recover some stolen documents, or to thwart some sinister power from carrying out some diabolical scheme that would be injurious to the free world. So each episode ended up showing Mr. Phelps and the 1M team putting the final finishing touches on the mission exactly on time and according to a brilliant plan, and in the last scene they are shown speeding away to safety and glory.

Those then were the basic essentials to this successful TV series. I ought to emphasize that the mission impossible plan always made use of the calculated reaction of the opposing force or the antagonist they were seeking to disarm or destroy.

The same was true in Christ's mission. Even the betrayal of Judas and the plotting of the chief priests, elders and scribes were prophesied by Christ beforehand. The timing of everything was down to the exact day and hour. God had taken into consideration every aspect of the mission so that it went off flawlessly.

As I have said, every time a watched an episode of "mission impossible" I couldn't help but think of the impossible mission of Jesus Christ. Just as in the television series you first have to first understand the need and purpose of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me briefly state the need and purpose of his mission.

The will of God is revealed to us in the first two chapters of Genesis. God made a perfect world that he declared very good. Into this perfect world he placed a man to have dominion over all that he had made and he gave him access to the tree of life so that he might live forever in fellowship with his Creator. God also saw that it was not good for the man to be alone so he made a wife helpmeet for him. However, as a simple test of obedience God placed in the garden one tree that was forbidden to the man. The tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God also allowed a sinister apostate angelic being into the garden to permit him to tempt the man to disobey his commandment on pain of death. The serpent was successful in tempting the woman and her husband to disobey God by eating of the forbidden tree. This sin brought about God's decreed punishment of death for them both. It also brought the man and his wife under the serpent's evil influence and power.

So it would seem that God's will has been thwarted and defeated by the action of the serpent and the first human pair. It would seem that after this had happened God would have to abandon his original purpose and pass judgment on both the man and his wife and the serpent (who was Satan in disguise) in keeping with his own holiness and justice. Unless God had a plan that would defeat the apostate angel and rescue sinners from his grip and restore them to righteousness all was over for mankind.

Any plan of God for the salvation of sinners would have to be perfect in every particular in conformity with his holiness. His purpose for the judgment on Satan and plan for the redemption of sinners was announced shortly after the fall of man into sin. He told the serpent that the seed of the woman would bruise his head. His prophets later enlarged upon this beginning prophecy. There would be the salvation of a special number of chosen sinners in a way that would uphold all the perfections of His Holiness and which would at the same time manifest his infinite mercy and love in rescuing lost and ruined sinners.

Since the fall of Adam down through history God has sent partial judgments but he has always spared enough men and women to keep mankind alive and maintain a hope of the coming of the Savior, the mission impossible man. The Bible progressively gave more details of how this God man would come and accomplish a mission of salvation.

He called a man named Abraham and told him that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He later prophesied that through a particular tribe of Abraham's offspring, namely the tribe of Judah, the Messiah would come. After that he revealed that a king of that tribe named David would have a son who would reign forever. It was prophesied that this everlasting ruler would be born of a virgin at Bethlehem. It was all an open secret but only believers in his Word would believe his revelations that a Savior was coming. However few if any understood that he would become God's sacrificial Lamb who would die on a tree to save sinners out of the Jewish family of Abraham and also from among the Gentiles.

The Bible inspired faith and kept hope alive that God would send a Redeemer to save his people from their sins. And just as the mission impossible team always had a perfect plan to accomplish their mission, so God had a perfect plan to accomplish his salvation mission. Nothing was overlooked. The timing of his coming was perfect. In the fullness of time he would come. He would be born of a virgin in an obscure village of Israel named Bethlehem. He would have to flee into Egypt. He would be called a Nazarene because he would be raised at Nazareth. He would come unto his own and his own would not receive him. He would be despised and rejected of men. He would be hated without a cause. All the powers of hell and wicked men would be arrayed against him. His mission was truly

impossible. It required a God man, one vested with supernatural wisdom, faith and power to successfully accomplish the mission.

What a lonely mission was his. Even his own disciples did not understand or cooperate. Peter, when he heard him say that he must suffer many things and be rejected by the chief priests, elders and scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again, remonstrated with him for saying such things.

Scripture then tells us that Jesus **turned around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said\***, **"Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."** Mark 8:33

Christ's mission was not only dangerous it was deadly. It was necessary that he rely on God's Word alone for every step of his mission and for the final escape scene in the awful drama. He would actually have to die on a Roman cross and be resurrected. Such a thing was truly impossible humanly speaking. But he demonstrated that he had power over death even before the cross when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for four days.

But certainly no man had ever officiated at his own death and brought about his own resurrection. Mr. Phelps might pretend to swallow poison, or pretend to die and then escape by some trick, but Jesus believed God's Word and acted upon it and was obedient to death, even the cruel death of the cross, for that was the only way man could be rescued and Satan be defeated.

He had to come into the world and take the broken covenant of Adam and live out a life of perfect obedience and then take upon himself the God decreed death penalty that was due for sin upon himself, thus paying the full ransom price for any sinner who applies to him for salvation. God's justice must be upheld. God's holiness must be preserved in forgiving any man's sin.

The wisdom of God worked out this plan for his Son to come voluntarily on a salvation mission. He would have to bypass the generations of Adam by being born of a virgin so that he would not be born with a sinful nature as all men since Adam have been born. He would have to live a sinless life in a sinful world, offering himself as the blemish less lamb of God and be put to death as God's sacrificial lamb in order to fulfill in his own person on the cursed tree the once for all perfect sacrifice.

Moses by God's command had enacted an elaborate sacrificial system for the people of God. Jesus death at Calvary put an end to that sacrificial system. God made sure that it ended when he sent the Roman armies under the emperor Titus in 70 AD to utterly destroy the Temple and all the genealogical records of the Jewish people, so that since that time no Jew can know for sure who belongs to what tribe or who could serve as a priest of the tribe of Levi or the offspring of Aaron.

And in accomplishing this mission he had to anticipate all the wicked actions of evil men. What they would do when they learned he claimed to be the Messianic King of Israel; how they would want to kill him; how they would plot his death. So his death had to be the fulfillment of the will of Satan and wicked men while at the same time be executing the will of the God of heaven in rescuing men from hell and from the dominion of Satan.

Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, **"Men Of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—<sup>23</sup>this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. <sup>24</sup>"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. Acts 2:22-24**

Just like a mission impossible ending, Christ overthrows the Devil himself. It says in Colossians 2:15 **When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. Col. 2:15**

Christ successfully accomplished his mission. He leaves behind a mission team of believers to take his message of redemption to a lost and dying world. His gospel is to be preached to the entire world before the end comes. A vast host, which no man can number, will be saved from their sin and the ruin of it. And God will then judge the wicked that refuse to believe and along with Satan they will be cast into the lake of fire. Then there shall be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

God's plan and purpose has not been thwarted or defeated. God is in the business of rescuing lost men and women and boys and girls. He saves them from their sins and from the thralldom of Satan. His will shall be as it was in the beginning before the fall, but there is more to praise him for now. His mercy and his great salvation by his own right arm glorifies him in an even greater way than if man had never sinned. Jesus said before going' to the 'cross -- **"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.**  
<sup>32</sup>**"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."** John 12:31-32

Have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? Do you acknowledge in your heart that you are a sinner in need of saving? Will you come to him today and be saved? His rescue is perfect. He not only accomplished our salvation by giving himself for our sins and thereby defeating Satan's power, but he then gives power to all who believe in him to overcome the world and sin. We are able to live a victorious life and look forward to an eternity of perfect joy and happiness. I invite you to come to Jesus and be saved? You will, won't you?

Hymn #523 "My Hope Is in the Lord"

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