

WCCC 2000

God's Eternal Purpose and the Overcomers (1)

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*Ephesians 1: 9 – 10 Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fullness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth;*

We want to thank the Lord for gathering us here this time. Every time when God's people gathered together, we feel very thankful to our God because we are living in the last days and God still allows us to be together. That really shows us how much He loves us. When we were thinking of this conference, we waited before the Lord as to what theme He wanted us to have. And as we waited upon Him, we felt that it was of the Lord that we should have the theme of this conference, 'God's Eternal Purpose and the Overcomers'. Now to some of you this theme maybe familiar. You may have heard it a number of times. To others it may sound quite remote. But we know that this is a very important theme. We believe that it is God's will that we should know His eternal purpose. It is the desire of our Lord that we be overcomers. So whether you have heard it before or you may hear it for the first time, we hope that we may all come before the Lord and really pray that the Lord will give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation that when we hear His word, the Spirit of God will send these words into our very spirit. That we may really hear what we should hear and even see what we should see. So this is our prayer and we hope that as we are fellowshiping together, we may all have a prayerful spirit before the Lord. We trust that He is with us and we believe that He wants to speak to us.

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us together this evening. We thank Thee because we believe this is Thy gift to us. And we do want to offer this conference back to Thee. We acknowledge Thee as the Lord of this conference. And we believe that Thou are here with us. Lord we are on holy ground. We want to remove our shoes and we want to bow before Thee and say Lord, what Thou want to say to us. Speak Lord, Thy servant hears. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

The theme of this conference is God's eternal purpose and the overcomers. There will be three brothers sharing this theme. My responsibility is to share God's eternal purpose concerning His Son. Brother Godwin will share on God's eternal purpose concerning the church and Brother Christian will share on the overcomers.

Now before we share on this matter of God's eternal purpose, I think first of all we will spend a little time on this matter of purpose. We know that purpose is very important to our life because our purpose governs our life. It gives meaning to our life. If we live on this earth without any purpose, then we will just be drifters. There is no meaning to our existence. Purpose is very, very important to our life.

When we read the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, you find that when he was a teenager he was taken as a hostage to Babylon. He was of a royal family in the kingdom of Judah. But when he was young, around fifteen or so, during the third year of King Jehoiakim, he was taken from the land of Judea into Babylon. He served as a hostage. You will think that this is a most tragic thing to a youngster because he was not only taken away from his home, he was taken away from his own country and he became a hostage. He was not free anymore. But while he was in

Babylon, it seemed that his fortune began to change. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, wanted to choose among these captives young men who were good looking, had wisdom and knowledge, understood science and were able to stand before the king. He would take out the elite among the captives and he wanted to train them. He would nourish them for three years, give them the royal food and wine and teach them the learnings and culture of the Chaldeans. Now just think for a moment, if you were that young man and suddenly you found you had great opportunity before you, how would you respond to it? You knew as a hostage, you had no hope. You were not able to continue your education. And you would not have such abundant food and wine. Of course you would grab onto it. You would think this would be the greatest opportunity that you would have. And you would just enjoy the king's food and wine. And you would very soon forget your home and your country.

But this was not the case with Daniel. Young as he was, the bible tells us, he purposed in his heart that he would not be polluted by the king's food and wine. He realized he was of the chosen of his God, even though the country had been taken. The nation was supposed to be representative of God on this earth. The name of God was on the nation. They were the vessels of God's name. But the nation failed God. Yet Daniel did not forget. He still remembered he was of the chosen of God. And his life on this earth was to testify of God. He was to live for God. So in spite of his impossible environment, not being able to be free and to do what he wanted but was a hostage and it was the king's command, yet he purposed in his heart that he would not be polluted by the king's food and wine. Now as to how he was to be polluted, there might be two reasons. Number one, during those days, the king's food and wine were first offered to the idols before they ate. So Daniel felt that since he believed in the living God, the one true God, he could not eat the food that had been sacrificed to idols. That would pollute him.

So he refused to take the king's food and drinks. And there might be another reason. Even if they were not offered to the idols, Daniel felt he would be occupied with food and drink all the time. Probably very soon he would forget who he was. He would be so attracted by the things of this world that he would forget his own identity. Maybe for these two reasons, he purposed in his heart that he would not be polluted and he would keep himself pure for God. This was a noble purpose. But so far as environment was concerned, that purpose could not be fulfilled. He was not a free man and he was under the king's command. Yet he had faith in God. He believed that if he stood for God, God would open a way for him. So he talked to the eunuch that governed them at that time. He told him that he wanted just to have simple food to eat and water to drink. He would not eat the king's food. Now the prince of the eunuchs was favorable to him and said to Daniel, 'if you do that and you become very thin, not like the other young people because of the good food they became fat, then my head will be cut off by the king because I was responsible'. Daniel sensed there was a favorable note in that response. So he spoke directly to the steward before him. He said 'now try me for ten days; if I became very thin and weak, then you give me the king's food. Otherwise, try me for ten days'. And the eunuch allowed Daniel to do that. After ten days, Daniel and his three friends grew fatter than the others. So they were allowed to just eat the simple food and to drink water. God honored their purpose. And God gave them wisdom and understanding. And especially for Daniel, God gave him the wisdom to interpret dreams and visions. After the three years were over, all these young people from all different countries were brought before the king. And the king tested them and found Daniel and his three friends were ten times wiser in judicial business than any of the other ones. And they were allowed to stand before the king. And we know that Daniel served two different kingdoms, not only the Babylonian empire but also the Persian Empire. And yet while he was outwardly

...serving earthly king, even the Persian king recognized he served God. And what a testimony he gave. Dear brothers and sisters, here you see the importance of purpose. Especially the young people who are here, remember it is most important to make a right purpose before God because it will affect our whole life.

If you read the New Testament, you find another young man, Saul. He was a Pharisee. He was a young man. But he had purpose. When he was young, he purposed to be the top in Judaism.

While other Jewish young people might seek other things, he spent his life and time studying the Jewish law. And even though he was young, he was already more advanced in Judaism. And probably he would very soon be the rabbi in Israel. That was his goal, his purpose. At that time he had no revelation from heaven. All he received was human traditions, the traditions of his father. Thus he thought at that time Jesus and those who believed in Jesus should be persecuted.

According to the Pharisees and the traditions of the fathers and the understanding of biblical prophecy, they were waiting for the Messiah. They were under the Roman rule at that time. So they were looking for the Messiah. When the Messiah came, He would deliver them from the yoke of the Roman Empire and make them the greatest nation on earth. So when our Lord came into their midst, they welcomed Him in the beginning. They thought maybe He was the Messiah. But gradually they were disappointed because our Lord Jesus did not overturn the Roman Empire and did not make Israel the first of the nations. Our Lord came to seek and to save the lost. He was doing the spiritual work. So they were disappointed in Him and they rejected Him. They crucified Him. They considered Him as an imposter of Judaism. Therefore Saul thought it was his duty to wipe out the followers of Jesus. He had no revelation. He had purpose and he almost reached his goal. But because there was no revelation so he went the wrong way. He thought that when he was persecuting the believers of Jesus he was serving God.

He did not know he was doing just the opposite. But one day while he was on the road to Damascus and getting close to the city during midday, suddenly a light from heaven shown upon him and he was stricken onto the ground. He heard a voice, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick the goads'. And Saul said 'Lord who are you'? And a heavenly voice said 'I am Jesus whom you persecute'. His eyes were blinded by the light but his inner eyes were opened. He said 'Lord, what do you want me to do'? And there he capitulated himself to God. And brothers and sisters, now his purpose had changed. He still was a man of purpose. But the purpose underwent a transformation. Instead of purposing something for himself, now he purposed God's purpose.

In 2 Timothy 3:10, there before his martyrdom he wrote his last letter to Timothy. And in that letter he reminded Timothy 'but thou have been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings'. Timothy was his son in the truth, so before Paul's martyrdom, he reminded Timothy, 'you are already fully acquainted with me; you know my teachings, conduct and my purpose'. And He purposed the purpose of God. He never deviated from that purpose. No matter how much suffered, he pressed on to the goal. And because of that, he could say before his death 'I have kept the faith, I have run the race and I have fought the good fight. And now there is the crown of righteousness waiting for me. Not only for me but for all those who love the appearing of our Lord Jesus'. For a man with the right purpose how different that life became.

On 1942 it was during the Pacific war the Lord led me out of Singapore to India. I was from Shanghai. In Shanghai we have a saying, if you are really unlucky, you end up in India. And I landed in India. But it was the most blessed time. There I met this sister and she told me her story. At that time the sister was already in her sixties. She was an English woman, a titled lady.

Her parents were millionaires. Her husband was a titled military person. But they all died and she was left alone. She inherited all the wealth. She lived in Italy. She lived in a marble palace but she felt life was meaningless. When her parents were alive, she always traveled with her parents around the world. She had everything but felt that life was meaningless. She was a believer but she felt there was no meaning in life. One year she went back to England. As a matter of fact, she went back every year. She went back to England to attend the famous Keswick convention. It was on the second week of July. But before she attended the Keswick convention, she went to another conference. It was Swanwick Convention. And the convention was sponsored by Jesse Penn Lewis. And while she was at that conference, she heard a young man spoke on the eternal purpose of God. And when she was listening to the word, the Spirit of God opened her understanding and she began to see that her life had a purpose and that purpose was linked to God's eternal purpose. If your life is linked to God's eternal purpose, then it is not a matter of sixty, seventy or eighty years. If your life is linked to the eternal purpose of God, can there be a more valuable and useful meaning of life? She was completely taken up with God's eternal purpose and she purposed that purpose. And she gave herself completely to God. This sister was Lady Ogle. And she was the one who supported Brother Sparks and his ministry.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not think that God's eternal purpose is so academic and so remote, or that it is just a teaching or theory; something for you to contemplate and has nothing to do with your everyday living. It is just the opposite because the eternal purpose of God affects our whole being. Purpose is important. But what kind of purpose you purpose is also important. If your purpose is low, then you live a low life. If your purpose is high, then you aim high. If your purpose is for yourself as to how I can promote myself or how I can be successful, then you

become a self-centered person. If your purpose is linked to God's purpose, then you want to live God's will, and you will live a heavenly, spiritual and abundant life.

This is our prayer; that we, whether young or old, need to purpose God's purpose. But how can we purpose God's purpose if we do not know what God's purpose is. God's purpose is the highest and noblest of all. There is no purpose that can be higher. It is God's will that we will pick His purpose as ours. We become a part in His purpose. It is not something outside of us, it is something within us and we are within that purpose. Brothers and sisters let us pray that it will be real to every one of us.

Now we come to God's eternal purpose. Ephesians 1:9 says, 'having made known to us the mystery of His will'. Brothers and sisters, 'having made known'; thus it is God's will that we know. What does He want us to know? He wants us to know the mystery of His will. Our God is a God of will. He is the supreme will. That is the reason why when He created us, He created us with a will. Everyone has a will. God is the supreme will. But that will is a mystery. Why? It is because God is a mystery. Who can figure out God? Nobody can. He is a mystery. Therefore His will is also a mystery. And when He made that will, He made up His will according to His good pleasure. God is the supreme will. He can will anything He wants to. Nobody can challenge Him because He is God. And when He wills a will, it is according to His good pleasure, that is to say, according to what pleases Him. Now nobody can challenge that. If God will such a will, you cannot ask Him why you will such a will. You cannot challenge Him because He is God and He is the supreme will. And He wills upon His good pleasure. But we must believe that His good pleasure is not something at the blink of time. Because He is the supreme wisdom, therefore when He wills according to His good pleasure, it has to be good. If it

can please God, then it has to be the greatest pleasure in the universe. And so there you find He made a will.

And that will is a purpose. That is to say, He decided on something. It is called God's eternal purpose. Number one, 'purpose' is in singular number. It was decided even before the foundation of the world. And that purpose governs everything. It is said here, 'Which He purposes in Himself'. He purposed that purpose in Himself. He did not consult anyone because there was nobody there. He purposed in Himself; according to His good pleasure. But it was a mystery because it is in Himself. Nobody knew and that was a mystery. It was a secret. God had a top secret and He knows how to keep secrets. We do not know how to keep secrets. We said, let me tell you a secret and that secret is out. God knows how to keep a secret. He purposed that purpose even before the foundation of the world. But He never told anyone. The angels did not know it. Men did not know it. Throughout the ages, nobody knew the mystery of His will. And yet God was working for the administration of the fullness of time. The administration original meaning is management of household affairs. You know God has a house there and He manages it. He has a plan. He has a counsel. And according to the plan He will work it out. God is not like men. When we do things, we may not think it out before. Therefore many things are accidental and not incidental. They come by chance. But God never does that. You find that God is a God of purpose, and after He set down His purpose, He will lay a plan. And He will manage that plan through time. Time is the agent of God and His administration. You will find that God set time after time. And in some version it uses the word dispensation. God planned time after time, age after age and gradually works out His purpose. But He never told anybody what that purpose was. In the Old Testament time, here and there He dropped some hints. Sometimes He used a personal history to drop some hints and make that

person as the sign of His purpose. But it was just a little bit. And sometimes He would use some words. Sometimes He used some prophecy. Sometimes He would even use some object as the lesson, like the tabernacle. Here and there you can find that God was dropping some suggestions and some hints. But still nobody knew. What was God doing? What was He really aiming at? And what was the mystery? You know it had not been revealed throughout the ages. You asked Abraham and he would say, 'I think I see something. But I really do not know'. You asked Moses and he would say the same thing. You ask Elijah or Ezekiel or any of the prophets. They would say, 'well I do get a glimpse of something but I do not know what that is'. But thank God, that mystery is now being revealed.

Brothers and sisters, you cannot know God unless He reveals it. In Ephesians 3, Paul said 'you know I know that mystery' because that mystery was then being revealed to the apostles and prophets. So today we know what the mystery is. The eternal purpose of God is now made known to us. Now when we see what that purpose is, and we look back through history, like reading the Old Testament, everything becomes clear. God is working out His purpose. And what is this purpose? And it said here, it is 'to head up all things in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on this earth'. To head up all things in Christ. Brothers and sisters, what is God's eternal purpose. God's eternal purpose is not something. God's eternal purpose is someone. In the purpose, He has one person in mind and that is His beloved son. Dear brothers and sisters, when we talk about the eternal purpose of God, you find that it is so all inclusive. No one can measure the length and width and depth of God. And yet brothers and sisters it is all summed up in Christ.

When you read the Old Testament you find many commandments and many laws. Even with the Ten Commandments you have ten. And yet Paul in the Book of Romans said, whatever

commandment it is, whatever thou shalt not covet, thou shall not kill and so on and so forth, they are all being summed up in one. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love is the form of all laws.

Dear brothers and sisters, you find that in the universe there are so many things, things in the heaven and things upon the earth. There are angels, thousands and thousands of angels, innumerable humans and mountains and rivers and birds. Numberless and yet there is only one. They are all summed up in Christ. In other words, everything will express Christ. And everything points back to Christ. Brothers and sisters, this is God's eternal purpose. God's eternal purpose is a person – His beloved, only begotten Son. And for His Son, He does everything. Aside from His son, He does nothing.

If God opens up His heart to you, what do you see in that heart? I have to confess that in the past, I always had this thinking that in the heart of God there are two, not one. One is His Son. The other is the church or us. Is it right or wrong? It seems that it is right for a long, long time. Because in the eternal purpose of God, you do find that there is His son in Ephesians 1:9-10 and you find there is another thing which He purposed in Christ, Jesus and that is the church in Ephesians 3: 10 – 11. And so I felt that in the heart of God, there were two and they were equal. But one day, I woke up. I saw in the heart of God there is only one person and it is His beloved Son. Aside from that Son, there is nothing. I cannot see myself there. I am not that important to God. I am nothing. I am not there. There is only Christ. But I looked further. I looked into the heart of Christ and I saw the church. I saw myself there. Dear brothers and sisters, do you see this? In the heart of God, there is only His Son. Everything comes out of His Son. Everything will return to His Son. Aside from His Son, nothing pleases God. Whatever is not of His Son is not in God. No matter how good it is, God will not have it. It is only His Son and He is to head up all things in Himself. But thank God. When you look into the heart of Christ, you find the

church and you find yourself there. We are all there because we are our Lord Jesus' treasure. For us He is willing to give up everything. So brothers and sisters, it is very simple. What is the eternal purpose of God? Christ is the eternal purpose of God. If we can hold fast to Christ, then everything will fall into the right place. If we do not allow Christ to be our all, then you will find we are lost somewhere.

So we need to purpose a purpose in our life. We need to take God's purpose as our purpose. God aside from your Son, let there be nothing in my life. Anything that is not of Thy Son, it is an offense to me. Brothers and sisters, we need to see this. Our whole life has to be taken up with Christ. Let Christ be everything to us. You know God has made Him head over all things. The church is the body, the fullness of Him who fills all and in all. Brothers and sisters, I hope now you can begin to see how glorious, how blessed to know the eternal purpose of God. And how practical it is. So may the Lord help us.

Dear heavenly Father, we do thank Thee because it pleases Thee to reveal Thy Son to us. We do praise and thank Thee that Thy Son is Thy all. And we do pray that He will be all in all in us. We acknowledge in our life we are far from it. We need Thy revelation. We need Thy light to expose us. We need Thy grace to deliver us. That Christ truly may be all and all in us. And Thy eternal purpose may be fulfilled even in us to the praise of Thy glory. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.