

WCCC2013

Follow Fearfully in the Eternal Purpose of God 2

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There are many aspects to the Christian life. But somewhere along in our Christian life, things are simplified greatly when everything becomes centrally seen in Christ. We mentioned this yesterday and we also mentioned the hymn that you all have. I think we should sing it one time since this describes what happens in our life when everything is Jesus and when Jesus is everything.

Let us turn to the scripture. Since the topic is the eternal purpose of God, we want to read Ephesians 3 as he testifies to the amazing stewardship that he had been given.

Ephesians 3: 8 – 11; To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Hebrews 3: 11 – 16; Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today", so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

Hebrews 4: 7 – 9; Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.

Joshua 18: 1 – 3; Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them. There remained among the sons of Israel seven tribes who had not divided their inheritance. So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"

Let us have a word of prayer.

Our Father we thank Thee who are greater than Joshua and who led us into the land. And now by faith we want to fully possess the land. As Paul prayed, we want to fill up with all the fullness of Christ. We

pray Lord that You give us this day, this as long as it is called today, this overcoming faith in us. We ask You to quicken our body and especially our heart to say yes to who has called us today. We pray in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Some of you are with us for the first time today. And you appear happier than those who were here yesterday. Because yesterday I got pretty much everyone to agree that they were stuck. Now what I said was this. If we live in this time frame as long as it is called today, we are probably stuck. Now I had many stuck people come to me afterwards, thinking somehow I can unstuck them.

But I think a simple word may explain this. Eternity is breaking in upon us. Today is passing away. But as long as we are here, we live in one of two time frames. We either live in today or as long as it is called today. What does it mean to live today? Today if you hear my voice. This is God's intent for all of us, to live today, under your open heaven, hearing the Lord's voice. If he said repent, then repent. If he said you have sinned, then you confess your sins. His precious blood cleanses you. You live today. It is so important that in the kingdom of God, you live today.

But in our year, we do not always live today because sometimes we have some issues between us and the Lord. Just to give you a simple example. We know that in Revelation 12:11, it says they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and they love not their life unto death. Now the overcomers are not stuck. We see Paul in Ephesians, he was not stuck.

First, he was under the precious blood. Now thank God for His precious grace. All of us Christians who live today are under His precious blood. But now if you have sinned and you have not confessed that sin or even admitted that sin, then there will be some issues. Now it is today, but it is as long as it is called today. There is something probationary going on. And if you live for a day without a day of your sins being cleansed by the precious blood, then you missed one day.

Second, they overcame by the word of their testimony. But now what happens if something in our life is compromising our testimony. Now we still know the grace of God and it is still today and there is time to do something about it. But it is like the children of Israel. They were at the river and the Lord told them to go into the Promised Land. The Lord's purpose for Israel was to march out of Egypt, across the wilderness and into the Promised Land as living today. The cloud was leading by day; the fire was leading by night. But what if we come to Kadesh-barnea and the Lord through Caleb and Joshua said, 'we go into the land, the Lord has promised it'. But we held back. In some sense, time is suspended until we hear His voice and go into the land. And then we are back here today.

Thirdly, in Revelation the overcomers love not their life unto death. But sometimes in our life with the Lord, we become very concerned with preserving our own life and it begins to compete with the Lord about something that we should be doing. Now do you see that there is an issue here? As long as it is

called today, you need to decide what to do. How many times we wrestled with the Lord over something He tells us to do and we are afraid what will happen. God is merciful. He allows us to mess up. In the end, will we obey?

Now many Christians, although they entered into today by the saving grace of our Lord Jesus, they seem to be wandering in the wilderness where time seems to be suspended and their Christian life is not growing. Neither are they under an open heaven even though there are three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. And they are not living today three hundred and sixty-five days a year. But the Lord's purpose is for us to live today. How wonderful it is to live today. Everything in Jesus and Jesus is everything. But in all of our lives, when we come up against the border of something, a new crossing in our life, we find ourselves at issues with the Lord in as long as it is called today. Now I do not have any time to talk about how you can get unstuck personally in your life. But it probably has something to do with sin, something to do with disobedience and something to do with self-preservation. Now my burden is to share about something larger, the church, according to Christ of the eternal purpose.

The Steward of the Mystery

We can see in the letter of Ephesians that Paul was the steward of the mystery of Christ, meaning the church. How did he become a steward of this mystery?

First, the Lord had to apprehend him. The Christ of the eternal purpose had to arrest him on the road to Damascus. Saul was down on the road and the Lord said, 'Paul it is hard to kick against the gourd. You are stuck'. And he saw a heavenly vision of the Christ of the eternal purpose. Years later he would say I ran in order to lay hold of that which I was to lay hold of through Christ Jesus. Another word to put it simply, I have been captured by Christ. Now I am running to capture Him. This was his life passion; to know Christ. Climb the mountain of Christ and discover all that is to know about Christ.

Now today, as long as it is called today, the Lord is looking for stewards of the mystery of Christ. But in order to be stewards, we have to be captured by the Christ of the eternal purpose. We have to see that He is God's eternal purpose. We have to see that He is the church and then we need to be trained by Him in how to work with Him in the building of His church. Now in these last days, the Lord needs such trustworthy stewards. But who have seen the Christ of the eternal purpose?

And so we can compare the church today to Joshua 18. Now we are in the land. But we have not claimed our inheritance yet. How many tribes were there? There were twelve. How many of them had not claimed their property yet? There were seven. They were stuck. They were in the land but not resting in the land. And what does it say in Hebrews 4. Joshua had brought them into the land of rest. But they still did not have inward rest. It is possible to be in Christ but not resting in Christ. It is possible

to be in Christ and not claimed your inheritance yet. They conquered some cities but others they ignored. How much of the land of Canaan was theirs? Everywhere, wherever they put their feet. God said the land you put the soles of your feet, that was the land I actually gave to you. And so they were in and yet they were not in. They were in the land of rest and yet they were not resting. And of course we know there were deeper issues than that. They had no king and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. So there was division among the twelve tribes. And so there were weaknesses and the enemy was always invading them. The Canaanites, the Amorites, and the Philistines kept coming and invading them because they were so weak. And actually it was not until David became king that they had rest on all sides from their enemies.

Now it did not surprise you that you came into the land of rest and there were enemies around. And all kinds of enemies in there like the Jebusites and the Canaanites. And there they were disputing your claim. Now how are we going to rest? It is by the victory in Christ. If we go step on that city, it becomes ours. And the church today is to come into fullness that will amaze the principalities and powers in heaven.

But unfortunately today, there are all different kinds of plans and marvels of building the church developed by men. Now near where I live in New York City, we come together and break bread on the sixth floor. Nobody knows we are there. There is a church in the newspaper today. It is a church built specifically for young people. And they have a wonderful band that plays hymns. They have lighting that changes color with the hymns and they have a stage. They have a very handsome minister. He has some tattoos on his arm and his hair is spiked up. Every Sunday six thousand young people come to their service. You think there are no Christians in New York City? There are lots of people who go. They hold seminars on starting churches. You can pay \$500 and learn how to start a church just like theirs. Now they call worship, 'staging your worship'. It is production. It is Broadway. It is professional. But is the church built according to the Christ of the eternal purpose?

Christ is the Eternal Purpose of God

The Christ of the eternal purpose built the church from the top down. He is the head; the originator, the foundation. He is within the people. The Christ of the eternal purpose built from top down. But we do not know what to make of their churches today. They do some Christian things; they say they love the Lord. You do not know what to say except that I do not see the Christ of the eternal purpose building the church. I see men building the church. Several years back when I was not even living in New York City, a man came and knocked on my door. I opened the door. He was a very nice man. He said 'I am so and so and I am pastor of rock church'. I asked him 'is the church here in our village'? He said not yet. And

I said 'you are the pastor and not yet'. He said 'we are taking a survey of the demographics of the neighborhood to see if this place is right for our church'. I told him I was taken and he said thank you and went off. They did start their church and it grew very fast. They knew how to build it. They were renting a big space. Everything went well for two years and then the people who owned the building sold the building and said they could not rent there anymore. Now they could not find another building. And this pastor moved back to Florida. And now there is no rock church there.

Man has all kind of good intention when they started out to build a church. But in these last days if we are to see the bride church in maturity it is urgent that it must be built according to the Christ of the eternal purpose. You know our children are growing up. Many of them will leave the Chinese church. But have we shown them the Christ of the eternal purpose? Do they understand what the church really is? Now in New York I see many of these young people coming for education from the various assemblies here. And many of them are content to go to something other than the church built by the Christ of the eternal purpose. If our children move to some other places according to the will of God, will they be stewards of this mystery? Do they understand that the Lord is the One Who builds His church?

Back in the days of Jesus, we know there was the temple there. It was the original design that came from the heart of David. The temple stood in Jerusalem. It was built according to pattern. But by the time of Jesus, the Jews discovered a more convenient way to worship in the synagogue. Now you will not find the pattern of the synagogue in the Old Testament. It is the design of men who were living in captivity. They could not go to the temple but they gathered for prayer, for worship, and for bible study. They could have many synagogues. They just need ten men and they could meet, no matter what language they spoke, no matter what their trades were. Young people could meet together, old rabbis could meet together. It was so convenient. But it was not built by God. If we look out to Christianity today, there are many, many things. Today in the news the pope was scolding the bishops in Brazil. He was telling them they have lost sixteen million members in the last ten years to the Pentecostal. And he wanted to start a revolution and build the church back up in South America. The United States is a land full of synagogues. May I say Christian synagogues? They appeal to a certain strata, to a certain language and to a certain age. How much we need to see the Christ of the eternal purpose. I pray that the young people who are here with us today, as long as it is called today, taste in their assembly the reality of Christ in their midst and be spoilt with that as they go to visit other places. It is time for us to be apprehended by the Christ of the eternal purpose, as long as it is called today.

Heavenly Calling

He is recovering His testimony on this earth. You know today the Lord wants to recover His testimony in our midst. But it can only happen if we look up to the throne in heaven and see the Christ of the eternal purpose.

Paul was a steward of this mystery. I have said yesterday that when you read Ephesians you see that Paul understood Christ and he shared in this mystery of God from the things that he wrote. The book of Ephesians is about this eternal purpose of God but Paul's outpouring of Christ came from his vision of the Christ of the eternal purpose. If you go back to Ephesians, we see that in Chapter 4 Paul started to talk about the life of the church and his calling. The church is living today under a heavenly call. And the letter of Hebrews exalts the same thing; you are of a heavenly calling. Paul shared in this wonderful Chapter 4 a picture of the church of the Christ according to the eternal purpose.

I was talking about us being stuck. And now I want to talk about this in relationship to our assembly and why our assembly may be stuck. When the Lord pours out His grace upon His people and the church was born in His love, there was this building that comes from the Christ of the eternal purpose. We see a simple design in this Chapter 4. Now this is our heavenly calling. We live today in this church, in the heavenly realm of the church. And that is to the glory of God. Now the church begins to build. But the church got stuck and what made it stuck? It is always the outward things; buildings, leaders, ministries, money. What do all these mean to the eternal church? The church lost his heavenly perspective and got stuck in these earthly matters. Fighting among the leaders in the church as to who get the Sunday school; who is getting paid and how much are they getting paid; a need for a bigger building. Whatever these things are, they are small stuffs. The church gets stuck in these things before it comes into the fullness of Christ. And when we get stuck, the Lord has stuck us so that we can look up to the Christ of the eternal purpose. We will ask the Lord, what is wrong, Lord? There is an issue here. What is this? Do we really care about these outward things? We should not. Instead we should care that our Lord is still building His church and we are getting in the way.

And so we will just touch a few things in this Chapter 4 in Ephesians so that we can see this Christ of the eternal purpose. Sorry I have to back up a little. I told you yesterday that I was a Baptist pastor. While I was a pastor there, one day someone handed me a book. It was called Normal Christian Church Life. I never read a book so scripture about the church in my life. This is Brother Nee's book. I went along and I went to the scriptures that he spoke of and sure enough there were prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. It was amazing. It was such a good pattern. I left the Baptist but I remained a pastor. And I started building a nondenominational church according to the pattern of the normal Christian church life. I became an elder, the senior elder. I set everything up; elders and deacons. It was great. So I was building this church and I heard a Chinese brother Stephen Kaung and then a Jewish brother Lance Lambert. And as I listened to their messages, I realized that the pattern that I have seen is just an outward

pattern. And then one day as I listened, the heavens opened. And I saw the Christ of the eternal purpose. And I saw the church in Christ. This was no longer my members. The church is an organism made up of His members. And all it took was to see the Christ of the eternal purpose that caused me to resign and tried to build that pattern. So all I needed to do was to go to some small fellowship that has a similar vision. I started to be a school teacher. To me that was the end of my career. Eight years of study of school for that. One day our brother Lance Lambert was at a meeting in Tennessee. I drove there to listen to him. And he was talking about the church life. And everything he said was killing me a little more. I never forget what followed after the meeting. I walked in the garden with my brother. And I said to him, 'what am I going to do, how am I going to live. I got a wife and three kids. What am I going to do?' He said, 'brother, the problem is never how you are going to live. The problem is how you are going to die. As soon as you see where He wants you to die, you will live'. So I just lived where I lived and died. Nothing I could do. But then I began to live. You know how Jesus walked through Galilee and people asked, 'how did you do all these things?' Then do you remember that Jesus replied, 'all I am doing is what I see my father does'. And the Lord began to talk to me. And I said what should I do? And he said, watch what I do. You know if we are going to be stewards of the church of the eternal purpose, we need to see what He does and join with Him. It was not for me to go start a church. It was to see what the Lord is doing and join myself to Him. It was to see the wisdom of Jesus as He built the church.

This was where I began to sense the awe of the stewardship that Paul the apostle had. We have in wonderful and open detail the wisdom that Christ has given Paul in building the church as a wise master. His whole apostolic ministry, he said, was by the grace and enabling of God. He was an advocate for God's eternal purpose and when people accused him, he never advocated for himself but for God's purpose and the church. Whether he encouraged or corrected his brethren, he always did it as a fellow member in the body of Christ and never lording it over people. He gave up the right to position and status to fill up that which was lacking in the suffering of Christ. When it came to the Corinthians, he did not slash them up for all of their carnality but only came with the cross of Christ as the antidote to their carnality. With all of his wisdom and knowledge he can tongue lash anyone of these foolish people. But he did not use the wisdom of men. He knew the church could not be built that way. He built up the brothers and sisters. In the heavenlies they were amazed at the wisdom and grace that were seen in our brother; they watched the manifold wisdom of God in this life of Paul. Dear brothers and sisters today, we need to see the Christ of the eternal purpose. If we want to be those who overcome, those who are unstoppable, those who are undeniable, those who are not limited by today, then we need to see the Christ of the eternal purpose. You know, he is building today. Are you part of that work today? Have you

given yourself to being part of that today? This is what will bring us to that maturity as the bride of Christ.

The Source of The Church

If you look at verses 8 – 10 in Ephesians chapter 4, you see the source of the church. *Therefore it says, “WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN”.* (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

So what do we see? Christ far above all, and in all of His authority and all of His love, what was He doing? He fills all things. He gets so much to pour out. He wants to fill us up with the fullness of God. In chapter 1, what is the church? It is ‘which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all’. What is your church, my church, His church? It should be the first receptacle on earth which is so full of Christ that His glory transparently shone through the church. It fills us so full that all that the earth sees is Christ. Are we transparent yet? Are we showing the glory of Christ? He is filling us. How do we know He is filling us? Because the first thing He did is that He raised up men, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers. He also raised up sisters, but he is looking for men. These brothers first saw the Christ of the eternal purpose and they accepted His calling. Brothers, it is not too late. If His calling is upon you, if He has shown you part of His inheritance, it is time for you to take it. The world has stolen too many God called men. And they are enslaved by the deceit of this world, the lure of the riches and the cares of this life. There are higher matters here. Now only the Christ of the eternal purpose can arrest you and can teach you His way.

What a noble calling. What a costly way. Now be warned. You saw the way He dealt with His twelve disciples. They were always seeking things outwardly and He was always correcting them and showing them the inward reality. Men are always consumed by the outward things. But God through Christ wants to work in us the eternal purpose today. What a tremendous work that is. Only God can do that. You know Paul’s prayer that ‘to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith’, so that you can commence to comprehend all the dimensions of it.

Heavenly Vision

It is wonderful to see the Christ of the eternal purpose as our heavenly vision. And it is wonderful to have this vision work in us a spiritual reality.

Now what else do we see. We see the body of Christ. Look at the fullness there. Every member supplied. Now that does not mean every member supply soymilk. The church is not built so simply. Here is what it means. Every member has a unique supply of some aspects of Christ that nobody else has and we need for completeness. Now you know whom I am speaking to. I am speaking to brothers and sisters hiding under the bushels. We cannot come to fullness with just a few people ministering and exercising gifts because every member has a uniqueness to supply. And if you look closely, this uniqueness not only supplies the others, but it holds us together. Now to me this year 2013 seems to be the year of the cane because every brother here seems to be walking with a cane. It is because the joints are not working. The supplies are broken down. They need fullness; how much more so is the body of Christ. If we are going to be built to maturity, how much more we need that uniqueness that you have. You know what Paul saw is that we came to a unity of the faith as one mature man; everyone has the experiential knowledge of the Son of God as one new man. We have been sitting in the heavenly places with Christ. And the Lord by the Spirit is revealing Himself to us. And we are coming to a fullness of stature in Christ. When Paul looked up and saw the Christ of the eternal purpose, he saw that He is God's will and he saw his part to play. Now have you seen the Christ of the eternal purpose? Are you watching His hand building the church? Are you giving glory to God every time you see His hand working? You know there is a lot of the cross to be worked on in our life. Every fellowship has a brother and a sister that cannot get along. That is alright as long as we are willing to take up the cross. You probably pray harder for the Lord to come back if you have those brothers and sisters among you. There is a fullness to be had. But we have to let the Lord build His church. Can we get our hands off? What happens when we put our hands in there? We get stuck. By God's mercy, He will not allow it if He is really the head. There are many times the assembly that we started goes the wrong way and the light seems to crunch down. We better look up. Sometimes we go through trials just in order to look up. And our brother Stephen promised whatever our trials are; they will not be as bad as Job's. If we have a living church life, sometimes we get stopped and we get stuck. But do you not know the Lord just wants to fill us with Himself and there is something human standing in the way? Some human authority needs to be laid down; some foreign ideas coming from the world invaded our church.

Now we want to live in His church in today and not in as long as it is called today. So I finish with this example. Ninety years after Christ, Jesus said to The Church of Ephesus, 'as long as it is called today, you have lost your first love. Remember how far you have fallen, repent and do the works that you first did'. Now what happened when that message was delivered in 90 A.D. by this letter of John? Two groups immediately were evident. There were those who lived in today and there were those who lived in

as long as it is called today. Those who lived in today heard what the Spirit said to the church. They repented and lived in today as overcomers. Others heard but they did not know what to do. What do you mean first love? What are you talking about? Maybe they had a quarrel with the Lord. What do you mean, we served you so much? They had an issue with the Lord. The Lord said, 'if you do not repent, I will take the lampstand away'. Now a church without a lampstand is not living in today. Right until His return living in as long as it is called today, there is still a chance. Brothers and sisters, for us, we need to repent. There is still a chance as long as it is called today. Let us not play games when the Spirit of the Lord is speaking. Wonderful when Jesus comes back and we are living in today. May that be our readiness when He comes.

Prayer

Even so come Lord Jesus and speak to us by your Spirit in these last days. O Lord, against ourselves we rather repent and be found living in today than living in some kind of wilderness. Thank you for speaking to us this week. O Lord, we want to hear Your voice. By thy mercy. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.