

## SERVING GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

### GOD RESTORES MAN TO HIS ORIGINAL PURPOSE

*Philippians 2:5-11—For let this mind be in you which [was] also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in [the] likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and [that the] death of [the] cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal [beings], and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to God [the] Father's glory.*

*Matthew 11:29-30—Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

May we have a word of prayer:

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us together. As we think of Thy imminent return Thou hast still given us this opportunity to gather together before Thee. It shows how Thy heart desires that we be ready, prepared for Thee. So dear Lord, we do come together to offer ourselves to Thee. We pray that Thou wilt give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation to the full knowledge of God. We do confess that without Thy Spirit's working nothing can be done; but dear Lord, we offer ourselves to Thee and pray that Thy Spirit will touch each and every one of us. Do not allow anyone to be excepted, that every one of us will be open to Thy speaking. Give us the spirit of revelation that we may really see Thee and come to know Thee. Thou art our only salvation, and we give ourselves to Thee. Glorify Thyself. We ask in Thy name. Amen.*

As we are gathered together I always think that such gatherings are the mercy of God. What if our Lord Jesus had returned last night? I think we would all be weeping this morning. But He loves us so much that He does not want to see us unprepared. He wants every one of us to be ready for Him. So whenever we have an opportunity to gather in this way we cannot help but thank and praise the Lord that He is so gracious and merciful. He does not want anyone to be left behind when He comes, but He wants us all to be there to welcome Him. So thank God for this rare opportunity.

Why are we here? We are here to serve the Lord. Many people feel that just a few chosen ones have been called to serve God and the rest are to be served. But thank God, it is His will that every one of us who are saved is supposed to serve God because it is the eternal will of God. God made

man in order to use him to destroy His enemy and to bring all things to the feet of His beloved Son.

### **God's Purpose in Creating Man**

Now we would like to review our human history. After God created man in His own image, after His likeness, He put him in the Garden of Eden. It was a garden of pleasure full of fruit trees for the food of man. In the midst of the garden God planted the tree of Life, and hinted to man that this was the tree they were to eat of; but he left the choice to man. And by its side God planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now after the tree of Life there is nothing better than the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because this was food for the soul. The tree of Life was to be the food of the spirit. God wanted man to make his own choice of which tree he would eat because He did not make a robot. He gave man a will just as He is the will. So He wanted man to make the choice of whether he would eat of the tree of Life and let God be His God and serve God's purpose, or whether he would be independent and live by his own wisdom.

### **Man Was to Till and Guard the Garden**

Then God put man in the garden, but He did not want him to be at leisure because if man is at leisure there is temptation. Therefore He wanted him to be occupied. God gave man a command to till and guard the garden because He wanted him to improve and make full use of what He had made. At the same time God wanted him to guard the garden. Now you may wonder why God wanted man to guard it. It was because it was a garden without a wall, and God wanted man to be that wall. So when man was made, he had a duty to perform. God wanted man to be the wall of that garden, so you can imagine the power man originally had. For man to be the wall around a large garden, how diligent and capable he must be.

### **Man was to Destroy God's Enemy**

But why does that perfect garden, which everyone could come in and enjoy, need a wall? It is because God knew that outside of the garden there was an enemy who was waiting to come in and swallow up man because he knew that man was created to perform God's purpose and destroy His enemy. It would be easy for God to destroy His enemy, but that would not give Him any glory. It would be like a grown-up man beating a little child; there is no glory in that. That is the reason why God created man a little lower than the angels, and He is using that which is a little lower than the angels to destroy the higher archangel. That is the glory of God. So when man was created, he was given much grace, but he was also given responsibility. Unfortunately, our forefathers neglected to guard the garden, and they allowed God's enemy to slip in. And we know how Eve was tempted by the tempter because she had wandered around to the center of the garden and saw the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

## **Man Chose to be Independent of God**

Do you think God would plant a bad tree in the garden of Eden? No, all the trees in the garden were good. So far as the tree of knowledge of good and evil is concerned, it was good, but if it is without the life of God then it can be terrible. So God gave man a choice and unfortunately he chose the wrong one. They would rather be independent of God and dependent only on themselves. So man ate the wrong tree; that is to say he chose his destiny. Instead of being used of God to defeat God's enemy he joined the rank of God's enemy, and that is the story of the beginning of man.

When we were born into this world, we inherited Adam's life; therefore our very life is sinful, which explains our past life. But did God give up on man? No, He still wanted man to serve Him, and this is where we find the Word became flesh. Thank God, instead of forfeiting man, rather He came to save and to deliver him. God still wanted to use man, and that is the reason He sent His only begotten Son to be a Man.

## **God Sends His Son to Become Man**

Philippians 2 gives us a very brief description of the incarnation. It tells us that Jesus did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. Now this has a reference to Lucifer, the archangel who was not equal with God but only a created archangel. However, he wanted to have that place which was equal with God. Now who is equal with God? Only His beloved Son. God and His beloved Son are one in the Spirit. Whatever belongs to God the Father belongs to the Son. Colossians tells us that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. Whatever you can think of God as being or doing, His Son equally shares. So all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily—His glory, His honor, and even His love which we cannot fathom—yet He emptied Himself.

What does it mean to empty ourselves? What is within us that can be emptied? We have nothing to be emptied of but our sins. And yet the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who is the fullness of God that we cannot even fathom, emptied Himself. He is the Son of God and equal with God, yet He did not grasp it. Not only did He not grasp it but He emptied it. In other words, He emptied all the glory and honor associated with His deity. He forfeited all the glory as God. Of course, we have to know that He cannot empty His deity because that is what He is. However, He emptied all the glory and honor associated with deity and He took the form of a slave. This is what God originally wanted with man. Man was to be God's slave and serve Him. That is the meaning of man, but unfortunately they rebelled against God. They wanted to be themselves, but instead of being themselves they fell into the enemy's hands.

## **The Lord Jesus Takes the Form of a Bond Slave**

However, the Lord Jesus took up the form of a bondsman. He came into this world as a slave of God which is what man originally was meant to be. Jesus did not come just for Himself; He

came to fulfill the purpose of God. So inwardly He had the image of a bonds slave; outwardly, He took the fashion of a man. When the Lord Jesus took up the fashion as a Man, it was in its full meaning. He submitted Himself totally to His heavenly Father. And when you study the four Gospels you find again and again He said, "I cannot do anything by Myself." Actually He could do lots of things, but He said, "I cannot do anything. Whatever I do it is because I see My Father has done it. I cannot say anything by Myself; I say it because My Father has said it. My time is not My own."

You will remember that His earthly brethren challenged Him: "If You want to be famous do not hide in the village. You should go to Jerusalem during the feast time; then You will be known by man." But the Lord Jesus answered: "Your time is always ready, but My time has not yet come" (see John 7:2-8). In other words, He was waiting for His Father's command. Think of that!—a perfect Man who had His own will, and yet He denied His will completely. He could do many things by Himself, but He refused to do anything without His Father's command. His whole life was for His Father. And this is what man is created to be. No wonder that the heavens opened three times and the Father said: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

### **As Man the Lord Jesus Delivered Mankind**

One day the Lord Jesus took three of His disciples to the Mount of Transfiguration and there He was transformed, His clothes becoming whiter than light. And Moses and Elijah came to talk to Him about His exit from the earth. His entry was "the Word became flesh" and now He had lived a perfect life as Man for thirty some years revealing man as he is meant to be. Then we find Moses and Elijah coming to talk to Him about how He was going to leave this world. By every right He could have left from the Mount of Transfiguration and returned to His Father, but He did not do this. If He had done that, there would be only one Man in heaven and no hope for anyone else because He is righteous and we are unrighteous. But thank God, instead of leaving from the Mount of Transfiguration He went down from the mountain to Jerusalem and there He was crucified—not for Himself but for us.

Outwardly, He was rejected by the Jews and the Gentiles, but actually, He went to the cross for man's sake because God put all our sins upon His body. And there on the cross He bore the sins of the world. He was offered up as the Lamb of God, and because of this there is forgiveness for sin and hope for every one of us. This is what God has done for man. He sent His Son into the world as a Man, and as a Man He was to deliver mankind. And by the grace of God we have believed in Him and we now belong to God.

What is the meaning of man? Does God save us just for ourselves? Someone has said: "If my two feet are in heaven I am satisfied." But this is not what God created man to be. He wants to save us to the uttermost. He wants to restore us to His original idea of man. He wants us to be used by Him to defeat His enemy and bring all things to the feet of His beloved Son.

## **Yoked with Christ**

How is this to be done? In Matthew 11 we read of the Lord Jesus calling us to be yoked with Him. Today, probably the young people do not understand much about a yoke. But in China when the farmers till the ground, they still use animals for this work. The farmer will take a trained animal, whose will has been broken and can listen to the farmer and yoke him to an untrained animal. As they are plowing the trained animal will listen to the direction of the farmer and plow a straight furrow. But when the untrained animal sees something that interests him, he will turn in that direction and make the plow zigzag. However, the trained animal is stronger, so the untrained one has to follow him, and gradually he learns to obey the farmer. Of course, in the beginning when he disobeys, the farmer probably uses a goad to touch his leg which is a rod with a sharp end. Of course, he does not want to hurt the animal; he just wants to remind him that he has a master. But the animal does not understand, and he will kick back and thus be hurt. But after a number of times he learns the lesson.

## **Personal Testimony of Salvation**

This is where we are. After we are saved God yokes us together with Christ, but how do you explain that? I think you have to go back to the very beginning. When we are saved, what do we appreciate most? Probably it is that our sins have been forgiven. That is what happened to me. I was a young man of fifteen years old, but for a whole year I had been bothered by my sins. Nobody talked to me directly, but the Holy Spirit began to touch me and for a whole year I was under the burden of sin. Actually I was a good student, and I was not only friendly with my school mates but even with the household servants. People looked at me as a good Christian, but I knew better. Sometimes I would sit there and weep because I was thinking of my sins. Who can deliver me? By the grace of God, one summer vacation I went to a conference. I wanted to be saved and that is the reason I went. I listened to the messages, but unfortunately, what the preacher preached I already knew. So I was not touched at all. A few days passed and I saw people going to the altar and being saved, but I was still unsaved. One morning I was in my room, and I do not know whether I was praying or talking to myself, but I said, "Why is it that other people have gotten saved easily, but it is so hard for me to be saved?" Then I thought: probably I am gospel-hardened because I know the gospel so well and I could even preach. Then I told God: "If You want to save me, save me now; otherwise I am going to tell You good-by." I was desperate.

That afternoon I went to the meeting. I heard a young man who had graduated from Asbury College in America, and he preached from John 3:16. Now I knew that verse so well that whatever he said I knew already. Nothing touched me. After he finished preaching he called everybody to kneel down and pray. So I knelt down and a one of the pastors came and knelt by me. All he did was persuade me to go to the altar. Now I had been there a number of times, so what is the use of going there again? But out of courtesy I said, "Okay, I will go." Again I went to the altar and knelt

there and started to pray and cry, but nothing happened. And that meeting of hundreds of people was over.

Thank God, as I was walking out a Chinese pastor, who evidently had noticed me, stopped me and point blankly asked this question: “Are you saved?” Probably he thought I was, but I had to be honest. So I told him that I hoped to be saved. He knew something was wrong, so he stopped me. Everybody had left and we were alone in that big hall, and he asked me a question: “Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?” I said, “I do; I have believed ever since my childhood.” He said, “Turn to I John 1:9 and as you read it, instead of using the word “we” put your name in it.” So I followed his direction. I read the verse with my name in it. “If Stephen confesses his sins God is faithful and righteous to forgive his sins and all his unrighteousness.” He asked me to read it twice and then said, “Let’s pray.” So we knelt down. Now I knew how to pray, so when I began to pray I began to confess my sins. I said to the Lord: “There are many sins I have committed that I have forgotten, but You know them all. Now I have done my part, and I am waiting for You. Now it is Your turn. Will You keep Your Word?” And somehow I believed from the bottom of my heart that He had heard, and suddenly that burden of sin fell away. So I stood up and he asked me: “Are you saved?” I said, “I am.” He said, “How do you know?” I said, “Because there is such peace in my heart.” He shook his head, and in that very moment God gave me the word and I told him: “I know I am saved because God says so.” He said, “That is right. Your emotion may change, but God’s Word never changes.” He was very wise in leading people and he said, “You go out and tell someone what the Lord has done to your life.”

I remember very vividly going into my room and opening my Bible to II Peter chapter 1. As I read it I felt that it was my Father who was speaking to me. It was so intimate, and praise God it has been this way from 1930 unto the present time.

When we got saved, we can hardly believe how much God has done for us. He has not only forgiven all our sins—“though our sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow,” but more than that, there is something very positive. When you are saved, your dead spirit is renewed into new life. God has made man with spirit, soul and body. Our body is the contact with the world around us. Our soul is to express our self, and our spirit is supposed to fellowship with God because God is Spirit and only spirit can communicate with God’s Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit Dwells in Us to Bring All Things to the Feet of Jesus**

Now when you are saved, why is it that your contact with God has been made? Your spirit that was dead in sin has been renewed into life. Your sins are forgiven and God has given you a new spirit and that is the reason why you can cry, “Abba Father.” But more than that, when you are saved, Christ Jesus came into your spirit by God’s Spirit and became the life of your spirit. Your self is the life of your soul, but Christ is the life of your spirit. Not only that, the Holy Spirit also came into your spirit and dwells there. Now what is the Holy Spirit doing in you? He is there to see that the life of Christ grows in you. Whatever is not of Christ He will gradually, continually

deal with in order for you to bring all things in your life to the feet of Jesus. That is the work of the indwelt Holy Spirit.

Before you were saved you may have frequented certain places all the time, but after you are saved, is there a difference? Nobody told you where to go, but when you are going to where you should not be going, there is that still small voice of the Holy Spirit within you talking to you. If you are quiet enough you will hear Him say, "Do you think it is right for a Christian to frequent such a place?" Gradually He will do His work in you. This is to be yoked with Christ. He is meek and lowly in Spirit and only when you listen to the voice of the indwelt Spirit will you be saved to the uttermost.

### **A Personal Testimony of Baptism**

Maybe it will help some young people if I use my own illustration about the matter of baptism. When I was a baby, my father baptized me, but after I was saved some people began to tell me that I needed to be baptized by immersion. I said, "No, I have already been baptized. I cannot be baptized again because when my father sprinkled the water on my head, he did it in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So I cannot blaspheme the name of God." I would argue with whoever talked to me about it until finally everybody gave up on me.

One day I was visiting a friend who lived next door to Watchman Nee. He mentioned baptism again to me and I argued with him. He gave up on me and said I was hopeless. As I was sitting there praying I said: "Lord, I know baptism is to be by immersion which is the right thing to do; but it is not convenient for me. I love my father (who was a pastor) and do not want to offend him." So I told the Lord, "I promise You that after I am on my own I will be baptized by immersion." Is that not reasonable? Suddenly I heard a voice. I literally heard a voice: "He that loves his father and mother, brother and sister, wife and even his own life more than Me is not worthy of Me." That broke me. I wanted to be a disciple of Christ, so I told the Lord, "All right, I will do it."

So I went next door and knocked and brother Nee opened the door and said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want to be baptized." He said, "Does your father know?" He knew my father. I said, "No, but the Lord told me to do it." So I was baptized the next day. I did not let my father know for about a year, and one day I had to tell him. When I told my father about it, it hurt him very much, not because I was baptized by immersion, but because I did not trust him. He said, "If you wanted to be baptized by immersion I would have done it for you, but you did not trust me." And that hurt my father.

When you are yoked with Christ and that goad touches you, you may feel a little hurt, but you will know the joy afterwards. The joy of obeying God is the greatest pleasure in the world. This is the way the Lord will bring everything in your life to the feet of Jesus. The greatest service that we can perform is obeying the voice of the indwelt Holy Spirit because He is the One who sees to it that everything in your life will be brought to the feet of Jesus. This is fulfilling God's original purpose. Do not think of doing great things; it is in these little things that you can prove your faithfulness.

## **Serving the Purpose of God**

Finally, I want to relate to you a true story. I knew a sister who lived in Italy in a marble palace. She was from a noble family and had inherited all the properties of her parents and husband, but she was alone. She was a Christian, but she found life meaningless. Every year she would go back to England to attend the famous Keswick Convention. One year she attended the Swanwick Convention, which was raised up by Mrs. Penn-Lewis. And it was there that she heard a young man preach on the eternal purpose of God. She was deeply touched. She began to see that life is meaningful and she became a life-long supporter of brother Austin Sparks. It was the eternal purpose of God that changed her whole life. During the war I had fled from Singapore to India and she received me into her home. She told me, "My all belongs to God. Whatever the Lord wants is His." This eternal purpose of God became her life.

What is life for if it is not serving the purpose of God? No matter what you have done on this earth, there is nothing that can be compared to that of serving God's eternal purpose because this is what man has been created for. If you miss it, you miss the very meaning of life. So do not look to doing some great things; just yoke with Christ and let the Spirit of God teach you and He will help you to fulfill God's eternal purpose in your life.

Shall we pray:

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee because Thou does not want us to waste our life. Thou hast told us that we need to live for Thy eternal purpose and bring everything in our lives to the feet of our Lord Jesus in order to fulfill the meaning of man. Oh dear Lord, will You not apprehend each and every one of us? No one is too old nor too young to really live a life for Thy eternal purpose. Here we are, Lord. We give ourselves over to you. May Thy Spirit work in every one of us until Thy purpose is realized. May all glory be unto Thee. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.