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God's Eternal Purpose (4)

Ephesians 6:10 – 20 For the rest, brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the might of His strength. Put on the panoply of God, that you may be able to stand against the artifices of the devil: because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies. For this reason take to you the panoply of God, that you may you be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having accomplished all things, to stand. Stand therefore, having girt about your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace: besides all these, having taken the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one. Have also the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word; praying at all seasons, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; and for me in order that utterance may be given to me in the opening of mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings, for which I am an ambassador bound with a chain, that I may be bold in it as I ought to speak.

Let us bow and pray.

Dear heavenly Father, we thank and praise You because You gave us another chance to gather here before You. Our hearts are full of thanks and praises when we gathered before You, because we who are saved can gather before the table to remember You. And because people like us can be saved and can serve You. We want You to be satisfied. Lord, when we read Your words here, we ask You to reveal Your words in our heart through the Holy Spirit. That You reveal the spiritual realities in us; so that we can truly see Your glory and Your victory. We give this time into Your hand. We look to You to glorify Your Son. We ask in the name of our Lord. Amen.

Thank the Lord that He has given us the chance to gather before Him. For the past several mornings, we have been sharing on the eternal purpose of God. We see that before the creation, God has predestined in Himself a purpose. That purpose is from eternity past to eternity future. Since God has destined

this purpose, it will never change. What God has destined in the purpose is that He will gather and give all things to His Son. God loves His Son and God wants to give all to His Son as His inheritance. He wants His Son to be the head of all things. He wants all things to manifest His Son's glory. For this reason, God has created all things. But God thinks that is not enough. So in Christ, He added in His eternal purpose. He wants to give His Son a bride to be His helper. And this bride is what we know today as the church. What is that eternal purpose of God? Simply put that eternal purpose is Christ and the church.

I remember our dear Brother Watchman Nee had said these words. If we truly know Christ and the church, the whole bible will open up to us. It is because the entire bible talks about nothing else but Christ and the church. And this is the mystery of God. And this is the mystery of the Christ. May the Holy Spirit truly reveal to us so that we can truly know Christ and His church. And that we can truly pursue Christ. And because we pursue Christ, He can gain His church. This is what we see from chapter 1 to the first part of chapter 3 in the Book of Ephesians. These passages also let us see the purpose that God has destined in Himself and also the purpose He destined in Christ; and how God, through His Son Jesus Christ, accomplished this eternal purpose. From Ephesians 3: 14, we start to see that God wants to accomplish His eternal purpose in us. This speaks of our subjective experiences. All that God has accomplished in His Son are objective truths. Now God, through His Holy Spirit, wants to work in us what He has accomplished in His Son. And this becomes our subjective experience.

Yesterday morning we were sharing how God through His Holy Spirit, works out His eternal purpose in us. Now that He has called us, He wants us to walk worthy of our calling. Now that He has saved us, He wants us to rise up and learn Him. Now that we are His beloved children, He wants us to rise up and to be like Him. He wants us to have a fear of Christ and be submissive. We have to manifest God's eternal purpose in church life, personal life, social life, or family life. We need to manifest the eternal purpose of God in every aspect of our life. And this is how God works in our life to manifest His eternal purpose.

This morning we are going to share a step forward. From Ephesians 6: 10 till the end of Ephesians, it tells us that God works out His eternal purpose through us. There is a slight difference here. Before it was how God wants to work out His eternal purpose in us. And this is inside of us. And now it is how God wants to work out His eternal purpose through us. This is through us. Today what is the eternal purpose that God has destined in His Son? He wants us to be the counterpart of Christ. It is a matter of life to be the counterpart of Christ. The bible said with His likeness – like Him. He wants us to be the counterpart of His Son in life. The bible also tells us not only has God prepared a counterpart for Adam, He also wants this counterpart to be His

helper. So here you see that if it talks about helper, it becomes a matter of service. Counterpart is a matter of life. Helper is a matter of service. Today God not only has to work in us so that we can be His counterpart, but He also wants us to rise up and be Christ's helper. Thus there are two aspects here. Not only are we the vessel of Christ that holds the fullness of Christ so that we can manifest His glory, but we are also His tool so that He can use us to accomplish the work that He wants us to accomplish. Not only does He work in us, but He also works through us. And that work is to accomplish God's eternal purpose.

That is why when Paul came to this point, he said 'for the rest' or in some translation it is the word 'finally'. It means I still have remaining words to say; I have not finished yet. I remember Brother Sparks once said, what is that meaning in the original language of the word 'finally' in here? He said it means that the words written here are not something supplemental, as if you already have finished but now you suddenly think of something else and you want to add on. But it means according to a lot of things said and summarized here, he pushed one step further to say more. And this is the meaning of the word 'finally' in the bible. Brothers and sisters, we see here that the Lord had said many words, and had done much work in us. Now He summed these all up and He moved one step further and said now you are going to be a helper. In the past you were not qualified. But I already worked in you so you are a counterpart. Now you are going to be my helper. Brothers and sisters, the book of Genesis makes this clear to us. In Genesis after God had created Adam, God said it is not good for man to be alone. He was going to give Adam a counterpart. He was going to give Adam a helper. Then you see that not only were Adam and Eve united as one, but they jointly obeyed the will of God. After God had created man, He told man to rule over the birds in air, the animals on earth and the fish in the water. He wanted man to subdue all things. He wanted him to guard the garden of Eden and to tend and work in the garden. So there you see that Adam and Eve were both counterparts and helpers.

Brothers and sisters, here we see that there is the invisible world. And there is a spiritual realm and in this spiritual world there is a spiritual war. And this is the war of the century. The world we live in today is a visible, materialistic world. And in addition to this visible material world, there is also an invisible spiritual world. In that spiritual world, there is a battle going on continuously. And not only is this battle being fought in the spiritual world, but we know that the result of this spiritual battle influences this material world. Not only does it influence the material world but it also controls this material world. What is the focus of this spiritual battle? Why is there such a spiritual battle? We see that the focal point of the spiritual battle is the eternal purpose of God. We know that God has predestined in Himself a purpose; and that is for His Son to be head of all things and to have His Son inherit all

things; that His Son is the center of all things. And this is the eternal purpose of God.

According to this purpose, God created all things. At that time the highest beings that God created were the angels and angels are spirits. At that time all the angels praised God. In the book of Job, we see all the morning stars were singing. The sons of God were there praising God. And at that time, the sons of God were the angels because they were all created by God. At that time the whole universe was full of worship and praise. All the created worship Jesus Christ as the Lord. And He is the head of all things. And that condition was truly glorious. The Son of God was truly being exalted. We do not know how long had passed before there was a rebellion in the universe. One of the archangels was Lucifer, the bright star. Maybe this archangel was the first angel to be created. When God created him, he was created perfect. In Isaiah 14: 12 – 15, we know that there the prophet Isaiah was talking about the king of Babylon. But suddenly there came a few verses which cannot be applied to the description of any person. Although he was talking about the king of Babylon, yet these few verses cannot be applied to the king of Babylon. In Isaiah 14:12, it said 'How are thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning!' Here we see there is a bright star, and this bright star is Lucifer. And he was also called son of the morning because he was the earliest to be created. And what does it say here? Isaiah 14:13 – 14 said, '*And thou that did say in thy heart, I will ascend into the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit upon the mount of assembly, in the recesses of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.*' Here we see in the heart of the earliest archangel that God created, there arose an evil thought. He said 'I, I, I'. He started to pay attention to himself. Originally, he was created for the Son of God. But at that point when he started to think of himself, there arose in him an evil thought. He said I will ascend to the heavens. I will be equal to God. Brothers and sisters, who can be equal to God? There is only one who can be equal to God. Philippians 2 tells us that Christ does not consider equality with God to be something to be grasped at. Only the Son of God is in equality with God. And this is not something that He has to strive for. This is His. But here there was this archangel who wanted to grasp at this position. He wanted to be equal to God. What is the meaning of this? It means he did not agree with but rather opposed to the eternal purpose of God. He wanted to destroy the purpose of God.

In Ezekiel 28, it talks about the king of Tyre. The first part of Ezekiel 28:2 said, 'Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyre.' There is a little difficulty in the Chinese translation. The Chinese translation used the word 'the king' and not 'the prince'. But that prophecy is about the prince of Tyre. Why does it use the word 'king' when it was actually talking about the prince? Just as the Chinese in the old days, the king was called the son of heaven. Although it called him 'king', yet it actually referred to the prince of Tyre. But when it

comes to verse 12, the tone was changed. It said 'Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre'. Here it uses the word king. But the king of Tyre in fact was only a prince. And there was a king behind him. And the following passage cannot be ascribed to any king on this earth. Very clearly what is described here was the condition in Eden, the garden of God. And here it said when God created him, he was created perfect. He was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. There were ten kinds of precious stone on him. And he had talent in all different kinds of music. And God set him up as the anointed cherubim before the ark of the testimony of God. We know what was on the earth is the foreshadow of what is in heaven. In Exodus, God told Moses to build the tabernacle according to the pattern on the mount. So here you see there was an ark of testimony. And on the top of this ark there was the mercy seat. And there were two cherubim, one on each side of the seat to cover the ark. And in heaven, God has His seat and He also has the cherubim anointed to cover His seat. That is the closest you can get before God. And that is the highest position. This archangel originally was this cherub who was anointed to cover the seat. God had given him many authorities and he ruled many places. And it is possible that our universe was under his rule. But there arose in him a pride because of his beauty and wisdom and his authority. And that resulted in his violent rebellion. He did according to his own will and not according to the will of God. And there is much unrighteousness in him. When God created him, he was created perfect. Then he worked out a lot of unrighteousness. The result was that he wanted to grab the position of the Son of God. And he wanted to rebel against the eternal purpose of God. But God did not allow him. God is a jealous God. He is jealous for His Son. So God expelled Satan from the garden of Eden. This is how Satan came about. Satan means adversary. God did not create Satan. God created a beautiful archangel. But this archangel turned into the adversary of God. In Revelation 12, it said when the dragon which was Satan was thrown out, he brought with him one third of the angels in rebellion. And he set up his own nation. And he has his own kingdom. He wants to be an adversary to the kingdom of God. Although God had already punished him, yet he did not repent. He stubbornly wants to grab the position of the Son of God. He still did not wake up. He still wants to oppose to the eternal will of God. And because of his rebellion, the universe under his rule entered into darkness and judgement. So the bible tells us that the universe became void and dark; without a purpose and was all desolation. And this was the result of the rebellion of the archangel. It seems that the eternal purpose of God had an interruption. But our God, once He destined His purpose, He will not change it. Not only that He does not change, but He is determined to go forward with His eternal purpose. We do not know how much time had passed. Genesis 1 tells us the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters and He used His love and passion to restore this corrupted world. He restored this corrupted earth in six days, so that this earth could be inhabitable. Thank and praise God. He not only restored this earth that we live in; on the sixth day He created us – man.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you can understand the eternal purpose of God, you cannot but prostrate and worship God. Not only did God not retreat and gave up His eternal purpose, but we see that God move a step further. He created man in His own image. He gave all things in heaven and on earth and under the earth to man to rule. He also told man to multiply and cover the whole world. He was supposed to subdue the whole earth. Dear brothers and sisters, do you know that the creation of man is the masterpiece of God? It is because God created man according to His own image. God created all other things according to His wisdom and might. But when He created man, He created him according to His own image. And this image points to the inward character. Why does God create man according to His own image? It is because only those who are created according to His own image can receive Him. All things can manifest God's glory. But all things cannot be united with God. Only we who are created according to His own image can receive the life of God so that in His life we can be united with Him. This shows us that God wants to prepare a counterpart for His Son. And this man is to be the counterpart of Christ. So God blessed that man. God gave him the dominion and God wanted him to subdue all things. Why did he have to subdue? This shows that the whole earth has rebelled. The earth was divided and all things are under the control of Satan. They became the tools for Satan. Now came man and God wanted man to subdue all things. He wants man to bring all things to the feet of His Son, Christ. In another word, he is to be the helper of Christ. And this is the eternal purpose of God. So men are intimately related to the eternal purpose of God. God wants His Son to have a counterpart and to have a helper. So God did not retreat but take a step forward. But we all know what happened when we come to Genesis 3. Satan is very crafty. He knew the eternal purpose of God. He knew that God wants man to accomplish His eternal will. So Satan came to tempt man and man fell into his temptation. His temptation is according to himself. How did he become Satan? It was because he centered on himself, the 'I'. Now he used this 'I' to tempt Eve. If you eat this fruit, your eyes will become bright and you will be like God. You do not need God anymore and you yourself are God.

Brothers and sisters, man fell into this 'I'. Man is created not for himself. Man is not the center. Christ is the center. Man is created for Christ. But now, man thinks only about himself. 'I want to be this way'; man always centering on himself. And this resulted in walking the path of Satan. And he fell into the control of Satan. We know today the whole world is under the dominion of Satan. And all men are under the power of that darkness. Satan was indeed something. He wants to use man to defeat the eternal purpose of God, so that the eternal purpose of God cannot be accomplished. But dear brothers and sisters did God then just give up? We know what is recorded in Genesis 1, according to chronology, may be four thousand years before Christ. In Genesis 1, God said let us make man according to our image and I give authority to man. But now man failed. David was moved by the Holy Spirit and he wrote this beautiful Psalm 8. When David wrote this Psalm, it was

around a thousand years before Christ. Three thousand years have already passed but God has not forgotten. In Psalm 8, it said, What is man that you are mindful of him? What is the son of man that you visited him? You made him a little lower than the angel. According to order, man is a little lower than angel. But you have crowned him with splendor and glory. You made him to rule over all things. How beautiful is your name! Although man fell, yet the man in God's purpose is still there. There, He still said, man you are the one that I visited. And I will complete my praise out of the mouth of babes because according to creation, man was a baby because man was created last. Man was created the day before the last day. Although man is lower than angel, but God gave him honor and glory as crowns.

But where is the man who can accomplish the eternal purpose of God? We cannot find this man throughout these three thousand years. Then one day in the fullness of time, the Son of man came to be man. The word became flesh, full of grace and truth. We have seen His glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God. The first man, Adam, failed. He fell into temptation when he was tempted. Now the second man came. When this second man came, He was also led to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. He wanted Him to return to the 'I'. If you are the Son of God, you can turn this rock into bread. If you are the Son of God, you can jump from the top of the temple, then people will see you and believe in you. If you are the Son of God, you just worship me and I will give you all things. As long as you think of yourself, that's enough. But what did the Lord say? The Lord said thou shall not tempt your God. Man lives not by bread alone, but by the word of God. You see that when our Lord was here on earth, He made God His center. He did not have His own self. He rejected himself. He submitted to His father, until death on the cross. Our Lord is the man in God's heart when He was on this earth. On earth our Lord had bounded the strong man who is Satan. He had taken the spoils of Satan's home which is us. Because He has bounded this strong man, He could take us out of Satan's control. He saved us out of the power of darkness, and moved us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. In Colossians 2:15, we see that when our Lord Jesus was on earth, He overcame Satan. In that battle, our Lord was completely victorious. He stood in the eternal purpose of God. Brothers and sisters, the bible tells us that when our Lord was on the cross, He had subdued all the powers and principalities. He bounded them and display their shame publicly. And He had boasted victory by the cross. This is the victory of He Himself. And on the cross, He crushed the head of snake. Even though the snake bit His heels, yet He crushed the head of the adversary. And He has bounded all these principalities. He displayed them. And He boasted by the cross. And this victory is not only for Himself, but also for the church. He had the victory for us. He defeated the enemy so that we can enter into His victory.

Dear brothers and sisters, here you can see a spiritual warfare. And this spiritual warfare lasts until today. Today, we are in the end times. In the last

days, the war is more severe because the enemy knows his time is almost over. But brothers and sisters, we have to remember one thing. The deciding victory is already won on the cross. You know in the war, there are many battles. Some of the battles are decisive. The decisive battle was already fought even though the war is still going on. And this is just the leftover. The victory is already decided. Dear brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus already fought that decisive victorious battle on the cross at Calvary. Satan already was defeated. He does not have any hope. Although he has no hope, he still will not give up. So what do we do? Today, after our Lord has already won the victory, He has ascended into heaven. And He has glory and honor as His crown. And this is what Hebrews 2 tells us. This man came. Although for now we have not seen all things subdued under His feet, but we see Jesus. He became a man, a little lower than angel, and He has received this crown of splendor and honor. And He has died for all these.

Dear brothers and sisters, our Lord is now on the throne. He is already victorious. And He is going to execute this victory. And on earth who can be used by Him to execute this? It is the church. The church has a mission. The church is not only for his own growth and building up. The church joins in this spiritual warfare as she builds up. It is a very strange thing that if you do not know the eternal purpose of God in your own life, you will not meet a lot of spiritual battles. But if you know that eternal purpose of God, then you will see that the spiritual battles will become more severe. It is because now you are on the battlefield. But dear brothers and sisters, what kind of battle are we engage in? Our battles are just to mop up. Like after the battle is already won, you will still find snipers when you go into the city. And then you have to clean them up. And this is the work of the church. And this is how we can be Christ's helper. Dear brothers and sisters, the bible tells us we are not only the counterpart, but we are also the helper as well. Now we have this mission. We have to subdue all things and put them under the feet of our Lord. And of course, if we have to do this, we have to obtain it first. If the church does not consider Christ as the head, if we do not keep Christ as the head, then we do not have the strength to bring all things under the feet of Christ.

Today we are called into this spiritual war. How did the bible put it? It said if you have to fight this spiritual war, you have to be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. This shows us that, first, we have to prepare our inside. And it means that we have to be strong in the Lord inside. In English the stance is stronger. It does not mean depending on Him to be a strong person. But it means to be a strong person in Him. We are in Him. Dear brothers and sisters, you know that when you are fighting a war, there are some strategic points you have to have. You see that it is very easy when you are standing on a higher ground and stripping a bamboo. So in a war, where we stand is very important. When we fight this spiritual battle, what is our position? Thank and praise God. Our position is in Christ; in the Lord. So Ephesians tells us He has raised us up from the dead to be resurrected with

Him and to be ascended into heaven with Him. Today our Lord sits at the right hand of God on the throne. And that is our position. Our position is one of resurrection and ascension into heaven. We are standing up there looking down. What is our strength? Not that we are strong in ourselves. Paul said whenever I am weak, then I am strong. It is my weakness; it is His strength. His power is manifested perfect in my weakness. Brothers and sisters, first thing is that we have to see that we are truly in the Lord. You cannot fight this battle unless you are in the Lord. You have already failed once when you are in yourself because Adam failed. But if you are in Christ, you stand in the Lord. His strength becomes your strength. His victory becomes your victory. Here it said we need to rely on His might and power.

What is this power and strength? It is what is said in Ephesians 1:19 *'and what the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of His strength, in which He wrought in the Christ, in raising Him from among the dead, and He set Him down at His right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come'*. This strength of His might has already been manifested in Christ. And by this mighty strength He resurrected. And now He sits at the right hand of God. In another word, He is the head of all things. Now this mighty strength works in us and in the church so that all things on heaven and on earth will be subdued under the feet of Christ. So in Ephesians 1:22, it said *'and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head of all things to the church'*. That is to say, He is the head of all things for the church. He is the head of all things. And He has given this to the church so that the church can subdue all things and put them before the feet of Christ because the church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Of course, if we have to fight this spiritual battle, we have to know our enemy. So here Paul said we are not fighting with blood and flesh. We know that Satan is very crafty. He does not show his true self. He uses coverups. And he uses the people and things who are under his control in this world because he is the king of this world. He uses the people and things of this world to attack us. Sometimes he uses man. Sometimes he uses matters and things. And he uses all these things to seduce, tempt and attack us. And He hid himself behind these things. If we do not know, we would think this person treat me like this or this matter is against me and there are problems with these things. Brothers and sisters, we have to see that what we are battling are not flesh and blood but the one who is behind all these things. Satan has his own kingdom. He has his own hierarchy within his kingdom and there are principalities, authorities, and the universal lords of darkness and the spiritual power of the darkness in the heavenlies. It is my opinion that under Satan there are his hierarchies. Maybe the highest one is the principality. In book of Daniel 10, our Lord was fighting with this prince of Persia. And He also fought with the prince of Greece. And I think these were

the principalities. And Satan would put a prince in each country. And underneath this were those who have authorities. Personally, I feel that these authorities are those recorded in Daniel 4. In there he talked about the command of the watchman and a holy one. So there are these authorities in the kingdom of Satan. And there they give orders. And when they give orders the men in this world follows. And then there are the universal lords of darkness. Satan uses darkness to rule this world. So men in this world only feel the darkness. And it can be said this darkness uses lies to rule this world. Satan is the first liar. Under him there are spirits of lies. For example, in I Kings 22, you see these spirits of lies. And he will deceive the world with lies so the whole world is under lies. The world is a big lie and he puts us under darkness. Then there is the spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies. He rules the world with this wickedness. Satan is the origin of wickedness. He rules the world with his evil. And we are battling against these evil spirits. You cannot fight with your own flesh and blood because you are not battling against flesh and blood. But you are fighting with the evil spirits. So you have to live in Christ. You need to stand on the high ground. You have to partake in His power. And you have to put on the full armor that He gave you.

We do not have time to talk about the armor. But I want to remind brothers and sisters that this full armor, strictly speaking, is what the church puts on because the soldier referred to here is the church. The church has to gird herself with truth. If the church loses the truth, the church fails. She has to put on the breastplate of righteousness. If there is sin in the church, then the church is under the attack of the enemy. The church has to put on the sandals of the glad tidings of peace. In another word, the church has to stand on the gospel. If we do not stand on the gospel, then we fail. And the church has to use faith as the shield. It is not just a matter of creed but a matter of living faith. We have to put on the helmet of salvation because the enemy always put different kinds of thoughts in brothers and sisters' mind. You are suspicious of me and I am suspicious of you. And the result is that the church will be in trouble. We have to put on the helmet of salvation. The church has to use the sword of the Holy Spirit and that is the word of God. Brothers and sisters, I always feel the word of God is the sword of the Holy Spirit. In another word, it is the Holy Spirit using the word of God. But today in the church, we use the word of God to kill brothers and sisters. If I do not like this brother, I will use the word of God to strike him. The word of God is not your sword. The word of God is like a two-edged sword which separates the soul and the spirit. The sword is to be used only by the Holy Spirit. In this way, the enemy will be struck down. At the same time, the church should pray and watch incessantly. This way, not only can we stand, but we can execute the will and calling of God which is what the original language means. We can overcome any resistance. We can bring the purpose of God under the foot of Christ. So the Holy Spirit said, you need to stand firm and you need to resist. You are victorious if you are still standing after the battle. Brothers and sisters, we thank and praise the Lord. His eternal purpose is so glorious. It is for His Son.

But we thank God because He calls us to receive His grace so that we can grow up and be conformed to Him, so that in service we can be His helper. May the Lord bless us.

Let us pray.

Our Lord and our God, we can only bow down before You and say what is man that You are mindful of them. Our Lord, we praise and thank You because You have accomplished everything so that we can receive Your grace, be united with You and can be used by You. Our Lord, what else can we say? We can only say, may You be supreme. In the name of our Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.