

Your purpose or God's?

According to His purpose alone



Peter McArthur

Recently I heard a preacher say we don't really know what God's purpose for us is and we don't know what His will is about. I immediately wanted to cry out "**He wants to bring many sons into His glory**" (Hebrews 2:10). Perhaps I should've yelled that out; it would've been interesting!

After momentarily recovering from the preacher's rather bold statement I flicked over to my favourite book, Ephesians. What peace it brought to my soul. My Bible is full of coloured markings, notes and scribbles, especially in Ephesians and Colossians. And quickly there I found it highlighted in blue and underlined – the Father's purpose and will for us, the world and even the entire universe.

Here it is (Eph 1:9-11): "**He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.**"

A more simplified version simply says "**He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment — to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In Him we were chosen, having been predestined according to His plan as He works out everything in conformity with His will.**" (J.B. Phillips version).

What a breathtaking passage! Now I don't want to denigrate the preacher (I actually think he was trying to make a point about something else) but whatever his intention was it probably didn't make sense to a lot of people, especially new believers. And I knew from talking to some relatively new Christians a couple of months earlier that many people today see "purpose" as relating to **THEM**. "What's **MY** purpose in life; what does God want **ME** to do?" etc. It's all pretty self-focused, which is a major problem in today's society, let alone the Church.

Many years ago I decided to stop trying to find out what MY purpose on earth was all about, and try as much as I could to fit in with the Father's purpose, and what He wanted. Now as the years have passed and as I (still) try to keep His purpose my ultimate focus, it disturbs me that many today are still trying to discover their role in life before they get a grasp on what God's purpose is primarily about. Once we get a revelation about the Father's purpose, the concern about our calling, our ministry and our giftings gets into the correct focus.

So the obvious question is of course, not about OUR purpose in life, but what is HIS purpose and will. The religions and philosophies of man usually seek to answer the four basic questions of life. Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Again all these are still pretty self-focused; understandable I guess. But only when we consider God's purpose and will FIRST do these questions make any sense.

Scripture says that He created nothing by accident: (Isa 45:18) **"For thus says Yahweh who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a useless place, but formed it to be inhabited), "I am Yahweh, and there is none else."**

- ❶ Father had a specific purpose (design) in His mind for each and every part of creation.
- ❷ A design obviously implies a Designer.
- ❸ A creation implies a Creator.
- ❹ A plan implies a Planner.
- ❺ A purpose implies a Person.

Evolutionists and atheists really do have a problem grasping this almost childlike concept. So we can quite easily deduct that God has a will. **"He made known to us the mystery of His will"** (Eph 1:9a) and **"predestined (us) according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will"** (11b).

Now what is this will of God? Well first we need to hold firm in our thinking that the Father wants us to know His will, His purpose and His plan. He's not hiding it from us and it isn't reserved for the spiritually elite alone to know. And while there are many texts that tell us what God's will is, it ultimately is truly only about one purpose, one thing alone that He wants to accomplish – He wants to **"sum up all things in Christ"** (Eph 1:10).

This phrase **"to sum up all things"** in the original Greek actually makes a rather staggering point because it says **"THE whole range of things"**. What a mind blowing concept. There's going to be a great gathering together of everything, the whole range of things in creation - already underway but not yet finalised.

Here in this wonderful verse is the extended meaning **“to bring back to and gather around the main point”** meaning of course Christ as Head. Here Paul has apparently used a word which is in the neuter gender of the Greek. It is not “all persons” or “all humans” or “all angels” or even “all the elect” but it literally says all **“things”**. This purpose of God is not limited to intelligent beings at all, but also to “things” meaning to everything He has created.

This great and awesome design of God is to restore harmony in His entire universe, both spiritual and physical. Satan and sin have disarranged all of creation’s relation to the Creator but now He means to gather up all together in Christ and re-establish the right order of things (1 Cor 15:28 and Col 1:20). A glorious Day yet to come but it will, and it’s on the way!

Reflect just for a moment on that extended meaning above: **“to bring back to and gather around the MAIN POINT”**. It means two things, one of course that Jesus Christ is the Head of not only the Church but ALL things, and He will be seen and acknowledged as such. But this “main point” also has the distinct meaning of referring to a point in time past when there existed no separation between the Creator and His creation - the garden east of Eden and the first man and woman to dwell there without sin or alienation.

God contemplates a grand and final re-gathering, a full restoration to that former condition when all things were in perfect unity. That unity was broken by the introduction of sin. The mystery of God’s will includes the restoration of this unity in and through Christ as Head; one kingdom on earth and in heaven - a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell eternally.

Paul calls this ‘Christ’s pre-eminence’. **“He Himself will come to have first place in everything”** (Col 1:18b). This means things spiritual and material. Someone said it was that Jesus became head of the Church through His incarnation and death, and is now also head of the universe in virtue of His absolute and eternal being. Christ is first in rank, first in dignity, superior in power, and of course pre-eminent in honour.

How then is this gathering being accomplished? Again we go to Ephesians. (Chapter 1 verse 11). **“...we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will”**. Everything God speaks, everything He reveals and all that He does is connected to this one and ultimate purpose. Everything we can read in the Bible is taking shape like an unbroken thread moving toward one final end – **“Christ in all”** (Col 3:11). And He chooses to use us as partakers in all that!

This is the reason the Father created the universe, formed the earth, gave His son, saved us, sent the Spirit, transforms us, etc. **“...God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”** (Rms 8:28). Note that it’s not according to MY purpose, YOUR purpose, or even combined MANKIND’S purpose. But for GOD’S purpose alone.

Romans 11:36 nails it for me: **“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen”**.

- ◆ **“from Him”** is about PAST things.
- ◆ **“through Him”** is about PRESENT things.
- ◆ **“to Him”** is about FUTURE things.

It all came from Him, is being sustained through Him, and ultimately will return back to Him. He's the source, the agent and the goal. There's a glorious ending awaiting us and all creation, and thankfully it's something purposed from the beginning right from the Father's heart.

Time now to let go of our personal ambitions regarding spiritual things, time to put aside fleshly desires of wanting recognition, time to re-adjust our thinking (that's what repentance actually means), and time to re-align back to what the Father wants. Let's work towards these things, while we still have the time!

Now here's something to test your spiritual maturity. What if you knew that after serving God on earth all your life, witnessing about Him, praying to Him, serving the brethren, sacrificing for Him – that you knew at the end of it all He would (kindly and without pain) annihilate you?

What if you knew that would happen, that at the end of your life serving Him He had the right to "snuff you out" so that you would never receive a reward of any kind – not even heaven? Would you still be willing to serve His purpose here on earth if you knew at the end there'd be nothing for you except complete annihilation?

Of course I don't believe that at all but I want us to consider, where do our true propensities lie? Are we serving Him because we know there's a reward at the end? Would we be willing to go through all we go through and serve Him just so His purpose can be done – with nothing for US to personally gain from it?

Obviously if this was really the case hardly anyone would follow Jesus and be committed to the Father's grand purpose. How many of us would actually put up our hands and say; "Yes I'll follow you Jesus even if at the end of it I get nothing out of it at all – except annihilation"?

Occasionally we need to stop and consider deeply, very deeply about such things. Not to disturb us or upset us, but to make us consider just where our true priorities in God are. Thankfully and graciously we DO know there are rewards (and His presence) awaiting us. But it does make you think – do we truly believe it's ultimately all about HIM! And everyone of us knows that "self" still rises up to make us stumble, yet the graciousness of God has allowed for that and still He loves us, wants us, and has prepared a place for us. Grace!

One of my favourite authors, Theodore Austin-Sparks wrote "**What we are after is to see the centrality and universality of the Lord Jesus, and He is by divine appointment the centre of everything in the universe, and every phase, every aspect, and He alone is its explanation**".

So brothers and sister, what can we end on except Scripture itself: "**Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**" (Rms 11:33).

Grace in Him,

Peter McArthur

issachar.org