

Purpose of Heart

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a purpose of heart, being devoted to God, and running the race set before us with patience and perseverance, despite opposition.

Scripture: 1 John 5:5

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Gods Purpose"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the importance of staying on the straight track of faith and purpose, using examples from the lives of biblical figures like Ruth, Daniel, and Phoebe to illustrate the rewards of unwavering devotion to God's will. He emphasizes the need to heed God's Word, avoid distractions, and overcome opposition in order to run the race of faith victoriously, just as Paul and Timothy did, with a steadfast commitment to God's purpose and grace.

Transcript

Just as he was nearing the end of a strenuous race, Paul earnestly encouraged Timothy to keep the straight track--to "strive lawfully," for Paul was finishing his course, he had kept the faith. "Continue thou," he said to the younger runner, "in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of." And, reminding him of his own energies, he said, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose" (2 Tim. 3:10).

Many younger believers set off with definite purpose to be devoted to the One who has redeemed them at the cost of His own life's blood, "I am His doubly!" they rightly exclaim. "I am His by creation right and by redemption right. It is only my reasonable service to be altogether for Him." That is good and true, but devotedness must run in the way of the will of God, made known in the inspired Writings, to be acceptable to Him.

It is easy to be sidetracked! It has often been said of Paul, he entered a street called Straight at his conversion, and he kept in it till the end of his life. To do that, it is necessary to give heed to what God says to us in the written Word; and by means of striking types, stirring examples, sound doctrines, along with infallible proofs, divine encouragement is ministered to this end. The God-breathed Scriptures are competent to "fully fit" us, just as we are told at the close of 2 Timothy 3.

First of all, look at the Moabitess who returned with Naomi to be among God's people. Some might say that a Moabitess had no right according to the law to be among the chosen people of God. But mark her

firm purpose! "Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee . . . whither thou goest I will go; . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (1:16). So Ruth and Naomi went on together until they came to Bethlehem. And that was not the end. Ruth found a husband in the son of Rahab of Jericho--Boaz, the mighty man of wealth; and divine grace not only gave her a place among Jehovah's people, but put her in the line of the royal ancestors of King David, and of David's greater Son (4:22; Matt. 1:5). Ruth began well, and would not be diverted; but she reached results which outstripped her highest thoughts, though not beyond the thought of the God in whom she came to trust. What poor sinner of the Gentiles, who has found forgiveness and salvation in Christ Jesus today, ever thought that he would be a son and heir of God and Christ's co-heir? Yet, through redeeming love, so it is. He is even a member of the body and bride of Christ.

We have seen what God did for a young woman. Now look at that young man in the world's metropolis. He belonged to the Lord, but he was a captive in Babylon. We are told of Daniel's purpose when he was in the midst of that large worldly city. He "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (1:8) with the Gentile King's meat. That was a fine start!

The finish was better! God watched over faithful Daniel, and though he passed through many great trials, the victories of faith were all the more triumphant. He was honoured by Gentile kings and they owned the God of Daniel to be supreme. Moreover God himself honoured Daniel, not only by giving victories of faith, but by making known to Him His mind and plan concerning the whole course of "the times of the Gentiles." Daniel, the captive, began by saying "NO" to the world's defilements! Who shall say what divine awards await those who say "No" to the world today, and "Yes" to the Son of God, who calls us to follow Him? "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God!" (1 John 5:5). In Acts 11:23, we read of one who was glad when he saw the grace of God in the blessing of many young converts at Antioch, and he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart, they should cleave unto the Lord."

Now look at another woman in the New Testament. Behold Phoebe furthering the good of the assembly at Cenchrea in the days of the apostles. We read of her in Romans 16. She had been a helper of many, and was even privileged to help the apostle Paul himself. About to journey to the city of Rome, where business matters claimed her attention, this earnest soul saw something of greater importance in Rome than business. Those who belonged to the Lord were there, and with a word of commendation from Paul, inscribed in the epistle she seeks their company. Her steady purpose put the Lord's interests first. Business was not allowed to divert her. The apostle desired the brethren to "receive her in the Lord as becometh saints," also to "assist her on whatsoever business she has need of you." God saw to it that she should receive encouragement. Phoebe's running was not in vain.

But what of the servant of Christ who was used to cheer her in the path? What of Paul, the aged, who exhorted and encouraged his son in the faith, Timothy, to diligence in the heavenward way? We have seen how he reminded the latter in 2 Timothy 3:10 of his "doctrine, manner of life, purpose." He pressed forward himself to the heavenly goal--"One thing I do" said he to the brethren at Philippi, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He might be put into prison, but that did not stay his zeal. Nay, it only gave him greater opportunity to write inspired epistles that others might have the truth, and be instructed more fully in the way of the Lord.

In the chapter in Timothy he speaks of the difficulties and oppositions which would arise. He foretells what is patent to, all in these days, just before the Lord's return. The faith, the truth, sound doctrine and divine

power would all be denied or withstood by those who made a false profession or had but "a form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5). Such are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. They lead astray the weak. Heady, high-minded, they are marked by boastful scholarship and learning, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." These sceptical professors of religion stand in sharp contrast to the true believer, who knows the inspired all-sufficient Scriptures, which make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The false-named knowledge or science which young Timothy is told to avoid (1 Tim. 6:20), like all the imaginations of modernism, rationalism and advanced ideas (apart from the revelation of God) yields no true benefit to anyone, and only awaits the foretold exposure of verse 9: They shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men."

The Apostle shows that this kind of opposition to the truth of God was personified in the magicians of Egypt and their imitations which were used in the presence of King Pharaoh to withstand Moses, when he sought the salvation of God's people out of Egypt (see v. 8). Thus do these men resist the truth. They are worthless in regard to the faith, as Paul says; and, the fact is, these men who boast great mental attainments are in reality, "corrupted in mind," for so the words should read.

All these oppositions to the truth may appear to be formidable, but greater is He that is in the believer than he that is in the world. Therefore, taking good heed to God's Word, we are to run with patience the race set before us, looking off to Jesus, who is now at God's right hand, having Himself gone through all the trials and testings on the way.

He did not turn away back when man and Satan raised the violent storm of hatred, persecution and opposition against Him; but as was foretold seven centuries before by Isaiah, He set His face "like a flint" (50:7), and as Luke says, when the time was come, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." His soul was troubled, but He would go through all "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." His whole course was according to the inspired writings, according to the will of God. He said, "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." In love and devotedness, our gracious Lord and Saviour went the whole way for God's glory, as it was written of Him.

That we might not grow weary nor faint in our minds, but rather be encouraged on the road, we are exhorted in Hebrews 12:3 to "consider well" HIM who endured so great contradiction of sinners against Himself. He went through all victoriously, and is now set down upon the right hand of God's throne on high. No wonder Paul pressed onward to the goal, looking forward to "that day," when Christ should shine supreme as over all; and it is not surprising therefore that he should urge young Timothy onward by reminding him of his "doctrine, manner of life, PURPOSE, faith long-suffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions" which came upon him because of those who resisted the truth. Like his Lord, he went through in triumph; for, with full purpose, he was careful to "strive lawfully." In this manner he desired Timothy to run the race set before him. In this way God desires us all to press forward today, in spite of the peculiar oppositions to the truth (so clearly foretold) in these "last days," just as Christ is about to come again.

The eternal purpose of God is in Christ Jesus, as Ephesians 3:11 says. He will bring all to glorious fruition in scenes of rejoicing and praise, where love, holiness and righteousness shall dwell. Meanwhile, let those who are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus rejoice greatly and let them know no faltering in their running, but with purpose of heart go forward. God has "saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus

before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9); therefore it is said for our encouragement, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

May purpose of heart similar to Paul's mark us all.

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