

God's Purpose for Us

by Major Ian Thomas

God's purpose for us is to make us alive in Christ and to build us up in Him to form a fixed abode of God, and this requires a supreme and unwavering commitment to Jesus Christ.

Duration: 39:02

Scripture: Matthew 16:13-20, John 2:23-25, Ephesians 2:4-6, Ephesians 3:16-19, Ephesians 4:12

Topics: "Purpose", "Commitment to Christ", "God's Purpose for Our Lives"

Description

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes that God's ultimate purpose for us is to have a deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is not only our Redeemer but also our very life. He stresses that true commitment to Christ must be reciprocal, meaning our dedication to Him should align with His purpose for us, rather than our own expectations. Thomas warns against superficial commitments that do not reflect a genuine understanding of Christ's mission and encourages believers to seek a quality of commitment that allows Christ to work through them in every aspect of life. He illustrates that true maturity and fulfillment come from being rooted in Christ and His purpose, rather than in worldly achievements or recognition. Ultimately, he calls for a supreme commitment to Jesus that transcends all other pursuits and leads to a life fully surrendered to God's will.

Transcript

Being the last occasion upon which we should all be assembled, I'd like to say how deeply I have appreciated the great privilege of being with you, and of sharing with you some of the wonderful treasures of God's Word that concern the Lord Jesus, who is not only our Redeemer, but who has become our Redeemer, that He might become our very life. I'd like you to listen carefully, rather than turn to the relevant passages, as I read just a few verses at the outset of our session this morning. I shall name the passage for the sake of some who may wish to make a note, but I just want to gather together a few verses that express in large measure what I believe to be the ultimate purpose of God in you and in me through His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Ephesians 2.4, that God, so rich is He in His mercy, because of, and in order to satisfy, the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us, even when we were dead, slain by our own shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive, together in fellowship and in union with Christ. He gave us the very life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him. Verse 22, in Him and in fellowship with one another, you yourselves are being built up with the rest to form a fixed abode of God

through the Spirit.

Chapter 3, verse 16, may He grant you out of the rich treasure of His glory, to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the Holy Spirit Himself. In dwelling your innermost being and personality, may Christ through your faith dwell, settle down, abide, and make His permanent home in your hearts, rooted deep in love, and founded securely on love. Verse 19, that you may really come to know, practically, through experience, for yourselves, the love of Christ which far surpasses mere knowledge without experience.

That you may be filled through all your being unto all the fullness of God. That is, may have the richest measure of the Divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself. For God's intention, chapter 4, verse 12, was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints that they should do the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body, the Church.

That it might develop until we all attain oneness in the faith, and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God. That we might arrive at really mature manhood. The completeness of personality, which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection.

The measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, and the completeness found in Him. Really mature manhood. The completeness of personality, which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection.

This is God's Word. This is the spiritual content of our faith. Anything less than this, which may be involved in our profession of the Christian faith, falls short of the Divine Purpose.

We see, therefore, that if Jesus Christ Himself, indwelling us by His Holy Spirit, reasserting His Divine Sovereignty in every area of our human personality constitutes true manhood and true maturity, then supremely our commitment is to Him, and to Him alone. In order that we might be maturely man, as God intended man to be. This is our supreme commitment, and priority number one.

Our personal spiritual relationship with the Lord Jesus Himself, whose presence within us, alone enables us to attain to that standard height of His own perfection. No matter in what area of activity or vocation your life may be, it is Christ Himself alone who will enable you to attain to really mature manhood. If you are studying engineering, always bear in mind that there is only one supreme engineer, Jesus Christ.

If you are a physicist, remember that the one who threw the universes into space is Jesus Christ. He is the supreme physicist. And in your study of physics, you are simply scratching at the surface of that which He Himself created, that had its origin in His mind.

If your purpose is to become a physician, remember this, that Jesus Christ Himself is the one who designed and fashioned the human body. If you happen to be training that you might become a teacher, remember that in His person dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So that in any area of vocational activity, as a scientist, as a teacher, as a physician, as an engineer, no matter what it may be, you will find only complete spiritual maturity and physical maturity as man in the person who is supremely all these things, in the absolute sense.

And any commitment to a vocation which is not dependent upon your commitment to Him means that you will be mediocre in your area, in God's terms of reference. Any commitment to any area of life that is not completely subservient to your personal commitment spiritually to Jesus Christ may win for you prowess

and recognition in time, but you will be unrecognized, a spiritual non-entity in eternity. You may blast your way to the top in any area of human activity.

You may become as famous as Mussolini himself and hang like him upside down in the streets of Milan from a lamppost, jeered at by those who once worshipped him. You may conquer a nation and maybe almost conquer a world, as indeed did Adolf Hitler, and die like the animal he was, and beg the scattered remnants of your following to soak your body with petrol and burn it. You may conquer commerce and become a multimillionaire in Los Angeles, and then one night take a pistol and shoot yourself between the eyes.

One of our greatest English poets died and was buried on a lonely shore, Mesolongium, in Greece. Of him it was said that he followed the bubble of success until it burst within his grasp, for he had been flattered by royalty and by kings. He had drunk deep of the sparkling pleasures of this world's Gaietian pomp until it left him nothing but the bitter, bitter dread.

At his dying there was no mourning, not one ray of hope to pierce the solvency of that unhappy seed. Of his own life he wrote this, the thorns that I have known are of the tree I planted. They have torn me and I bleed.

I should have known what kind of fruit would spring from such. My days are in the clear and yellow leaf. The fruits and flowers of life are gone.

The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone. He never became a man because he was never committed to God. That is why I have asked you this week to make no cheap nor shallow commitment.

I have not asked you to rededicate yourself in a way that you have already dedicated yourself maybe a dozen or a hundred times past, to leave you at the last even more exhausted than at the start. I have tried step by step and stage by stage, precept upon precept, to give you a picture in such a way that you can make a supreme commitment intelligent. And it is my purpose this morning so to propound the proposition that you may make intelligent participation on a solid basis that will stand you in good stead for time and for eternity.

It has been my supreme desire this week to introduce you to principles that will never depart from you and to which you may always return and find it true. The quality of supreme commitment to Jesus Christ. There is a commitment to Jesus Christ that he does not reciprocate.

I'd like you to turn this time to John's Gospel chapter 2 and the 23rd verse. John 2 23, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover in the feast day, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did. There appeared to be popular and enthusiastic acclaim of Jesus Christ.

A great multitude apparently committed themselves to Jesus Christ. And we might, had we known no more than that, have had legitimate reason to be highly delighted at the response that had been solicited. But it goes on to say in the 24th verse, but Jesus did not commit himself unto them.

In other words, their commitment to him was not reciprocated by his commitment to them. The quality of their commitment somehow fell short of that quality that he could reciprocate. Because he knew all men, and he needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.

And so although there was apparently enthusiastic and popular applause for what he was doing, he himself remained strangely reserved and completely unimpressed. We need to learn this. For one who had been less than man as he was might well have been swept at his feet on the side of what he considered to be popular acclaim.

But then you see he was man. And he knew that that which impresses man may not always impress God. If only we would learn this, it would help to reduce us in our own estimation to our correct side.

For so often we estimate our acceptance in the presence of God by our acceptance amongst our fellow men. This was a commitment which Christ could not reciprocate. For in point of fact they were not committed to him, nor to that purpose for which he himself had been by the Father committed.

They were committed only to the things he did. They were committed to the sensational. They were committed to the miracles.

They were committed to a man whom they thought to be committed to healing their aches and pains. But he knew that just so soon as they would become aware of the true commitment to which he by the Father had committed him, by virtue of his committal to the Father, they would shout, crucify him! Away with him! We will not have this man to reign over us. And that is why he remained reserved.

And that is why I haven't been over-enthusiastic about seeking from you some spontaneous or soulful emotional response to some challenge that I might give you, because I know that though it might impress me and others, it probably wouldn't impress God. For there is only one thing that impresses God, and that is your commitment to Jesus Christ in such a way that from now on without reserve, you are committed in him to all that which he in you is committed. Turn with me to the 16th chapter of Matthew's gospel.

Matthew chapter 16. You will remember in the 13th verse that when Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? For they said, There are many ideas abroad. Some say John the Baptist, others Elias, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answered, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. That you have discovered my identity is something which my Father has revealed to you.

And one might well have imagined that at this stage they were thus so committed to Jesus Christ that from there on he himself would be committed to them, but this was not the case. For in the 20th verse it says, Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. Strange that he should call to himself a company of followers, appoint them to be his disciples and his apostles, and then to place a complete and total prohibition that they should tell no man that he was indeed Jesus God's Christ.

The reason why he placed this prohibition upon them was simply that although they had recognized his identity, they were totally abysmally ignorant of the purpose for which he had come to be God's Christ. That although they had committed themselves to him as a man, they were not committed to his purpose as a man. For the next verse tells us, From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go into Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be

killed, and be raised again the third day.

In other words, he gave to them a preview of that for which he had come into the world, the program of his messianic mission, and no sooner had he begun to enlighten them as to that to which he was committed as the Christ, than Peter said, Not so, Lord. This shall never be. It can't happen to you.

I am not committed to you for this. Then said Jesus Christ, I do not reciprocate your commitment to me. For if you cannot be committed to me for that which I am committed by my Father, I am not committed to you.

And looking into the face of Peter, through his sincerity, through his personal affection, through his loyalty, through his zeal, through his enthusiasm, through all his mock heroics, he said, Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offense unto me. Thou savest not the things that be of God, but of man.

He was strangely reserved, almost coldly unimpressed, because God is not interested in our hysterical or emotional outbursts. He is interested in the quality of our commitment. They wanted to commit Jesus Christ to that to which the Father had never committed him.

They expected him to play party politics in the tiny extract of time and space in which he lived on earth as man. They were trying to reduce God to man's size. They were trying to put God's Christ into a purely parochial context.

They did not understand him to be the Lord of all history and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who was incarnate to serve every preceding generation and every succeeding generation. And so they committed him to their own little aches and pains, and they wanted him to take sides with the Jews against the Romans. And he said, I am not committed to that commitment.

And if you commit me to this, I do not reciprocate your commitment to me. They are not the only guilty generation. There are some of you right here this morning who think that God ought to be a Republican and not a Democrat.

Or you think that Jesus Christ ought to be a Democrat but not a Republican. There are some of you who still think that God ought to fight for America against the Russians. There are some in my country who maybe believe that Jesus Christ ought to be on the side of the English against the Communists.

I don't see any reason why he should be. I don't believe a Russian is any more sinful than an American. I don't think there's any more lust, any less lust, any less greed, any less selfishness, any less carnality, any less materialism, any less godlessness, for all you may have on your coin is in this country, than in Russia.

And if my country is to be judged by the use that it has made of the liberty that it has to read its Bible and obey it, and enter and worship God in the places of worship that are available to my countrymen, if my country is to be judged on the basis of the use it makes of the liberty that it claims has its democratic heritage, then my country is ripe for judgment. And I do not expect Jesus Christ to be on our side. But then I don't expect him to play party politics anyway.

I expect him to be what he is, the eternal God, in the eternal context of what he is, the everlasting present. God demands of you and he demands of me a quality of commitment to him that does not commit Jesus Christ to what you think he ought to be committed to, but that commits you to Jesus Christ in such a way that you are now committed in him to all that which he in you is committed, no matter what that may be.

Peter said to all men for safety, I won't, I'll go to jail for you.

If need be, I'll die for you. And no doubt that sounded good to all the others who were listening, but it didn't sound good to Jesus Christ. No doubt if Peter had been then standing in some missionary throng, challenged to dedicate their lives to missionary service on some foreign field, he would have been the first to come to the front.

But Christ would have been as unimpressed and as reserved under those circumstances as he was then. He said, Peter, I am not committed to your commitment, because the quality of your commitment is totally inadequate. The quality of your commitment is still related to what you can be for me.

The quality of your commitment is not related to what I can be for you. And before the cock is crowned twice, you will have denied me three times. That is why I do not commit myself to you, because I know what is in a man.

I am not impressed. Was he unkind? No, he was just God, who is a complete realist, and who knows your thoughts as he knows mine. That is why I am not interested today in any other quality of commitment than that, other than that to which he himself can reciprocate his commitment.

But what I want to tell you is this, that this quality of commitment is supreme. It is the supreme greater that comprehends all the lesser. That is why I would be deceiving myself if I imagined this morning that you would all be prepared for this quality of commitment.

It would be extremely unlikely, because if you were prepared to commit yourself in this way to Jesus Christ, it would be calculated completely to revolutionize your future. It might completely liquidate your plans as preconceived for days to come, as once over thirty years ago it completely liquidated mine when I was training in London University, studying medicine to go as a doctor, as a missionary to Africa. I did not know in the night that in tears of self-discovery, in the bitterness of my own despair, I discovered the adequacy of Christ and the nature of true commitment that giveth myself to him, not to do what I think he ought to do in me, but to do through me that to which by the Father he has been committed in me.

I did not know that night that it would mean within five weeks that I would leave the university where I was studying. But having come to this place of supreme commitment, that issue had already been settled, and I did not have to face the issue again. You see, you are not supremely committed to anything but Christ.

You are not committed to the mission field. You are not committed to a task, or a need, or a church, or an organization. You are not even committed to your own country, not if you are a Christian.

You are not committed to Christian education. You are supremely committed only to Jesus Christ and all that to which Jesus Christ in you is committed. If you make a mistake at this point, you will make nonsense of your life and everybody else's with whom you have to deal.

And if you are committed only to Christian education, and not committed to Christ and to that which he in you is committed in education, then the likelihood is that you will make nonsense of the Bible you teach. Because there is only one teacher who can take you through the word of God in such a way that your heart burns with him. And if you don't have him, then your Old Testament will become just a bunch of fables and myths of no historical value.

But you'll neither know God yourself, nor will you be capable of teaching anybody else about God in such a way that they know him too. You will become a cold, impersonal academician whose letter of the law kills. That is why this is a quality of commitment that will either spell life or death in every area of your activity.

What was the nature of Christ's commitment to the Father? His commitment to the Father was such that he was committed only to that which the Father in him was committed. That is why again and again he says the Son can do how much? Nothing. Apart from the Father.

He said, I'm not committed to do my best for my Father. I'm committed to my Father that my Father may do his best through me. That was the nature of his commitment.

I am committed to my Father in such a way that I am committed to all that which my Father in me is committed. But I have a supreme confidence that the Father who dwells within me and who does the work, John 14 10, is supremely confident for that to which he in me is committed. Now that is why the Lord Jesus was never panicked.

He was never taken off his guard. He was never dismayed or shocked by any circumstance that ever arose. Because he had a supreme confidence that the one to whom he had presented his body in total commitment, in him was adequate.

How do we measure the nature of his commitment to the Father? You can measure the nature of his commitment to the Father by the measure of the Father's commitment to him. Because he was so totally committed to the Father and to all that to which the Father in him was committed, the Father was totally committed to all that he did and all that he said, because all he did and all he said all he was was in complete and absolute harmony with the eternal purpose of God that he came to implement. I do only always those things that meet them.

That was the nature of his perfect standard height of Christ's perfection. Therefore, if you want to know the measure of your commitment in its quality to Jesus Christ, the measure is the measure of his commitment to you. Now, you may engage in every kind of Christian activity so-called, but if Christ isn't committed to what you're doing, you're wasting both his time and yours.

This does not mean that you may not be sincere at what you're doing. You may be making the supreme mistake that Abraham made. For when God said to Abraham, in thy seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, Abraham made the mistake of committing himself to the will of God instead of to the God whose will it was.

And that's a very subtle thing. For Abraham immediately had heard God speak, dismissed God, and said, now I will get on with the job of doing God's will. But I'll do God's will insofar as I'm dedicated to it Abraham's way.

After all, God has told me that in my seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. Right, the first thing I've got to decide then in order to do God's will is to discover how I, a man, can have seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. Well, there's one thing perfectly certain.

Sarah's too old, she's never born, she's barren, therefore I must think of a means whereby I can do God's will. Very subtle. So he has a committee meeting with Sarah and they decide to have Hagar in, the bondwoman, and they bear Ishmael.

And for 15 years Ishmael epitomizes God's will Abraham's way. And God says, no, I am not committed to your commitment to me because I have said Sarah shall bear a son. That is my will and that is my way of doing my will and I do not ask you to be committed to my will your way.

And that's why the Jewish nation today in Palestine is surrounded by Arab nations. That is why Nasser was in the United Nations in New York two weeks ago because of a sincere man who was committed to God's will, but not to God's will it was. And God was not committed to his commitment.

There came a time when in utter despair, having failed to squeeze one ounce of blessing out of his Ishmael whom he had nurtured for so long, he repudiated what God had repudiated and cast him out. And God gave him Isaac. Then God said, now take Isaac and slay him.

For you are not even to be committed to what I do. You are to be committed only to what I am. Slay him.

You are not even to be committed to your blessings. You are to be committed only to the blesser. And Abraham had learned his lesson and he went up into the presence of God and said, God, thank you for the lesson that I've learned.

Out of the bitterness of 16 years trying to make my Ishmael a blessing for you, I see now that you are the only one who matters. And if you are committed to slaying Isaac himself, now I am committed to you and to all that to which you in me are committed. And I will slay him, believing if need be that you can raise him from the dead.

God said, thank you, Abraham. That's all I was able to do to find him in the thicket, caught by his horse. And Abraham, for the first time, learned the principle of faith and became the friend of God.

What are you committed to? Are you committed to Jesus Christ, Supreme? Is this a passivity that robs you of your personality and being, of course? Was this commitment of Jesus Christ to the Father such that left him with nothing to do on earth except sit in an armchair with his feet in the mantle seat? This commitment of Jesus Christ to the Father in such a way that he was committed to all, the Father was committed to him, kept him busy for 33 years. It stood him underneath the tree where Zacchaeus was hiding. It stopped him by the well where the woman had come out from Samaria.

It raised Nazareth from the dead. It preached the Sermon on the Mount for 33 years until in obedience to the supreme commitment of his Father, he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But how did he walk this way? When he had to feed the 5,000, he simply said, Father, I am committed to you, to all that to which you in me are committed, and I am supremely confident you are competent for that to which you in me are committed.

Here are 5,000 men plus their women and children. We have five fishes and two loaves, but this is not my responsibility, Father. It is yours.

Thank you. And then he fed the others. And standing before the tomb where Nazareth sank, he said, Father, I am committed to you and to all that to which you in me are committed.

If you are committed in me to raising this man from the dead, I want you to know he's sinned, but you're adequate. Thank you, Father. And when on the very threshold of hell itself, where he was to be made sin and accept in his sinless person all the inevitable consequences of being made sin for you and for me, Jesus Christ, in this last supreme act of obedience, looked into his Father's face and took the bread in his

hands, spoke of his body so soon to be broken, and took the wine that spoke of his blood so soon to be shed, and said, Father, I want you to know that this piece of bread that represents my body, this wine that represents my blood so soon to be broken and to be shed, I want you to know that I step into this situation in supreme confidence that that to which I am committed in you, because you're committed to it in me to redeem a damned humanity, it is something for which you are gloriously adequate, even if I have to step into the mouth of hell itself.

Thank you. That's how he lives, by faith. That's how you are to live, by faith.

For as the Father has sent me, so have I sent you. As I have lived by my living Father, so you are to live by me. Once you've come to this place of supreme commitment, nothing can frighten you.

Nothing. Nothing. It's not hell itself, because you take every step in the same attitude of dependence and say, Father, I'm committed to you, and to all that which you and me are committed, and you're adequate.

Thank you. Is that the quality of your commitment? Supposing I were to come to you after this quality of commitment and say, Are you prepared to give your life to the mission to feed you? Say, Please don't be childish. Please don't ask me stupid questions.

I am already committed to Jesus Christ and to all that which he in me is committed. If he happens to me, if he happens to be committed in me to go to some mission field in the world, that has already been settled. That is an issue that is already behind me.

Don't ask me stupid questions. I am committed to all that to which he is committed. Ask Jesus Christ, then, if he is willing to go to the mission field.

Don't ask me. Because I am now identified with all that to which he is committed. If I were to say to you, Are you prepared to give your last step that you have in the bank, in the service of Jesus Christ? You would say to me, Don't ask me stupid questions.

Don't be childish. I am committed to Jesus Christ and to all that which he in me is committed. And if he happens to be in me committed to using the last step that I have in my bank balance, that is an issue that is already settled.

It's behind me. Ask him. Don't ask me.

Because it happens to be his mantra. If I were to ask you, Are you prepared to be an engineer in the service of Jesus Christ or a teacher? Are you prepared to die? You would say, All these lesser, lesser issues have been supremely comprehended in the greater. To me, to live is not what Christ gives me or the help he can give me.

To me, to live is Jesus Christ. And furthermore, I am supremely confident that he in me is competent for that to which he in me is committed, to which I am committed now and forever in him. That, I believe, is the only quality of commitment to which he commits himself.

It is the only quality of commitment that I'm interested in. It is the only quality of commitment that I believe I have a right or a mandate from the word of God to present to you. This is the proposition.

I invite your participation. But I want you to do so intelligently, recognizing that from this moment on, you have absolutely no jurisdiction whatever over your own future.

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