

Things Which God Hath

by Raymond Golsworthy

God's people are called to a glorious destiny, including sharing in God's eternal glory, being heirs of God, reigning with Christ, judging angels, and being the bride of Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 119:18, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 5:25, 1 Peter 5:10, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Divine Calling", "Eternal Glory"

Description

Raymond Golsworthy preaches on the profound revelations of God's glorious design and purpose for His people, which are beyond human comprehension but are unveiled by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. The sermon delves into six aspects of the Christian's calling: being called to God's eternal glory, heirs of God, kings, judges of angels, the bride of Christ, and adoption as sons of God. Each aspect reveals the depth of God's love and the exalted position believers have in Christ, culminating in the importance of loving God to fully embrace and understand these divine callings.

Transcript

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." 1 Cor. 2:9, 10

Introduction

For the born-again believer, one of the great motivations for pressing on with the Lord is a true understanding of God's glorious design and purpose for His people. That design is something of which the natural man knows nothing, but God has revealed it to His people by His Spirit. The Bible is the place where these 'sublime secrets' are set before us; hence the need for a diligent searching of the Scriptures-and always with the prayer, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psa. 119:18). God's plans for His people are indeed wondrous things; so wondrous, indeed, that, for the moment, we can only endure glimpses. The fuller content will only be known when we are glorified. (See 1 Cor. 13:12). Our object, in these paragraphs, is to provide some simple statement of what God's plans and purposes are. We ourselves have only had glimpses, but we feel that even those must be shared, and particularly so for the benefit of those who, up till now, have heard but very little of the subject. We would like to discuss six aspects of the Christian's calling:

1. Called to God's eternal glory

2. Called to be heirs of God
3. Called to be kings
4. Called to judge angels
5. Called to be the bride of Christ
6. Called to adoption (huiothesia)

It is our prayer that those who read may be both informed and inflamed as they see what the Bible has to say about these matters, and that we all may press on to a fuller realisation and enjoyment of our heavenly calling. May God help both writer and reader, so that some hitherto blinded eyes may be opened (Isa. 35:5), and that some who, till now, have only had dim vision, may be given a new clarity of understanding (Isa. 32:3). Best of all, may we all be granted a fresh vision of the King in His beauty (Isa.33:17) We begin by considering the wonderful fact that God's people are...

Called to God's eternal glory This is plainly stated in 1 Pet. 5:10 where we read, "The God of all grace hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." Immense truths like these can only dawn upon us slowly, but they are truths, and if we are prayerful and patient, the Holy Spirit will set at least something of the blessed reality before us. We note that Peter was addressing believers who had suffered much for Christ (see 1 Pet. 1:6, etc.), and he was desiring to send all kinds of helps and encouragements to them.

Outstanding among these was this amazing statement about their being "called to God's eternal glory". He would have them know that, although they were experiencing such grievous trials, they should "look right on" (Prov. 4:25) and see the unspeakable majesty of their calling. They were destined to share in the very glory of God! The wording here, of course, is very simple, and we are inclined to skip over such phrases, or to treat them as rather fanciful and far-fetched, but Peter means what he says, (and God means what He says); Christians are destined to share in God's eternal glory.

While none of us can grasp the full content of that word, it is evidently something we should know about, and ponder over, and, as we do so, God will surely give us some degree of comprehension-as much as we can take! All through Scripture, there are precious passages which bring before us the same glorious truth, and it may be well for us, right now, to mention just a few. First, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

Then Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, told the believers there that God had "called them unto His Kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12). The apostle is more explicit in his second letter, when he says, "He (God) called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14). Very understandably, we are inclined to balk at such words, but, after all, it is only a repetition of what our Lord Himself had said in His High-Priestly prayer to His Father in John 17.

There, we have the amazing words, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them" (John 17:22). And we need to notice verse five, where He speaks of the glory which He had with His Father before the world was. That, He is now saying, is the glory He, in turn, has given to His church! We also note that these are truths that had been expressed by the prophets centuries before Christ came. The prophet Daniel tells us, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

While we are dealing with these things, it might be well to make some reference to Paul's remarkable statement in Rom. 8: 18. He says, there, that he reckons that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. A word like that surely calls for some serious reflection! Who, we ask, would ever attempt any assessment, or measurement, of the age-long anguish to which Paul is there referring? We cringe at the very thought of such an undertaking; world-suffering throughout all time!

What a 'total'! But Paul says even that dread 'total', whatever it may be, cannot be compared with the 'total of the glory' that shall be revealed in us! It may be well, just here, to make one important observation. We have been speaking about 'sharing God's glory', and of 'shining with that glory', but, to some of us, that idea may not be altogether attractive! It makes us think of brilliant lights, golden thrones, glittering jewellery, etc., and we really have no taste, or ambitions, for splendours of that kind!

But we must realise that, when the Bible speaks of God's glory, something altogether different is in view. The teaching of the Bible is that God's true glory is in His grace, His inborn passion to bestow unmerited favours wherever He can find a way to do so. It should keep us marvelling for ever that the great God of eternity, the Maker and Upholder of this whole universe, is, above all a God of grace! In that connection, we probably remember an occasion when Moses said to God, "Show me Thy glory".

God agreed to do so, and caused His goodness to "pass before" Moses, while a voice proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (See Exodus 33:18; 34:5, 6). That, we say, is the true inner essence of God's glory, and that is the glory that shall shine forth from God's people. We should feel no reticence against sharing in that kind of glory! In closing this section, we could mention that, right at the end of the Bible, God's people are depicted as a great city, descending from heaven, and, "having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:9, 10, 11).

That is what God has planned. That is what God has prepared for us! And we may be quite sure it will be the glory of grace. May God show us more and more of His plan as the time draws near. Let us now say a little about God's people being...

Called to be heirs of God

This is stated for us in Romans 8:16,17, where we read: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Our 'heirship', evidently, is based on the fact that we are, indeed, God's true children; and that, in turn, is related to the marvellous miracle of new birth. That new birth is what has made them Christians, and there is no other way of becoming a Christian (John 3:3, 7)! When we hear the gospel, and, in our hearts, believe on the Saviour, God's Holy Spirit actually enters into us and we find ourselves "born from above". The in-coming Holy Spirit brings with Him the very life of Christ and the very heart of God. Thus, in a very real sense, we become God's children, and therefore His heirs and joint-heirs with Christ; a marvellous miracle indeed! Here, again, is something far beyond present comprehension, for who can say what it means to be an heir of God? We can only humbly accept the Bible statement, and believe that we are, indeed, the destined owners of all that God owns. It would not be wise to try to imagine all details, or how it will all work out; that will surely come to light in God's good time. We note that Peter endorses what Paul has said. He tells us that God, "according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3, 4). Peter's emphasis here is on the purity and permanence of this great inheritance; it does not fade away! Earth's

inheritances are very different from that; how quickly they fade away! How wonderful it is that true-born Christians can anticipate an inheritance that abides, even as God Himself abides. James, too, agrees with both Paul and Peter when he says, "My beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" (Jas. 2:5). Finally, there is the great confirming word of John in the Book of Revelation, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21:7). Indeed, those are the words of God Himself, through John. How wonderful that even we are the chosen heirs of God, through Christ, and joint-heirs with Christ! May God help us to receive and enjoy as much as He intends us to receive and enjoy while we are here below, and to wait patiently for the much more that is yet to come. We can now move on to our next main thought; something closely related to what we have just been saying. The Bible tells us, also, that we are...

Called to reign with Christ Again and again, the Bible declares that the Christians are God's destined Kings, and, further, that we are appointed to reign over all in fellowship with our Saviour! We all need to see and realise that, being a Christian is a regal matter. It is not just a rescue, it is an enthronement alongside the divine Rescuer Himself. Let us again list some relevant Scriptures. In Rev. 1:5,6, we read, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father: to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

In Rev. 3:21, Christ Himself says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." In 2 Tim. 2:12 the word is: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." In Rom. 5:17 Paul tells us, "They which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign (reign as kings, Berkeley) in life by One, Jesus Christ." This, we would say, is a particularly helpful reference. The thought, conveyed in the context, is that while, in our previous condition, we were reigned over by the awful powers of death, that is now all changed, and we are the ones who reign in the greater power of our Saviour's life.

This is a great 'turn around' indeed! As for the Old Testament, Daniel is particularly outspoken on the kingly calling of God's saints. Speaking of God's coming Kingdom, he says, "the saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom forever, even forever and ever" (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27). Long before that, and again speaking of God's coming Kingdom, Isaiah said, "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice" (Isa. 32:1); a beautiful preview of fellowship in dominion!

All these verses, both Old Testament and New, take us right back to the first chapter of the Bible, where we have the record of the original creation of man, and where the divine purpose of man's dominion is first introduced. We read, "And God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, and let them have dominion.'" Admittedly, in that verse, the area, or scope, of the "dominion" seems to be restricted to the animal kingdom, but, very beautifully, the Scriptures that were to follow unfold to us the comprehensiveness of rule that God, even then, had in mind.

In other words, Gen. 1:26 was but the beginning of a tremendous revelation about to be unfolded. Let us briefly trace the story. When we go to the Book of Psalms, and when the Psalmist is also dealing with the subject of 'man', we have the statement, "Thou (God) madest him (man) to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psa. 8:6). The next two verses again mention the animal creation, but, evidently, something far more was actually in view; "All things under his feet"!

When we reach the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find the writer there also quoting from Psalm 8, and he is the one who emphasises very strongly that, when the Psalmist spoke of "all things" (in Psalm 8), he meant, literally "all things", and with no exceptions. The verse reads, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his (man's) feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him (man), He left nothing that is not put under him (Hebrews 2:8)." Very interestingly, we also observe that, when the apostle Paul quotes from Psalm 8 in his first letter to the Corinthians, he is careful to point out that there is one exception to the "all things"!

The statement reads: "He (God) hath put all things under his (man's) feet, but when He says all things are put under him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under him" (1 Cor.15:27). So, God Himself is the one exception! (The inference here is very important, and most challenging; namely that if we are to reign over all, we must still accept the rule of God over us!). All this is a beautiful, though gradual, unfolding of God's great plan. It may be well, at this point, to insert a comment on some possible, (but unwarranted) reactions to this thought of Christians being 'kings over all'.

It seems to suggest some degree of 'domination', and perhaps a mild element of tyranny somewhere included. Such thoughts, however, become quite impossible once we understand the kind of dominion that is in view. We remember how the Lord Jesus said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you let him be your servant, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your slave: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:25-28).

In a word, then, servanthood is the sign of sovereignty in God's Kingdom, and the garment to be worn by those who reign with Christ is the garment of humility. This was most clearly shown in the case of Christ Himself. Philippians 2 traces the pathway very clearly: "He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant...wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:7-9). Putting it briefly, we may say it is a matter of servanthood before sovereignty, or, as we often hear, the cross before the crown!

Someone has said, "Among men, we aspire in order to reign, but, with God, we expire to do so; we only reach distinction through extinction". O how true is that word in Isaiah where God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8,9). The Bible speaks of a Lamb in the midst of the Throne (Rev. 5:6; 7:17, etc.), and that, surely, is the spirit of those who will reign with Christ. We now approach a subject which may surprise many, but it is something plainly taught in Scripture. We refer to the fact that Christians are...

Called to judge angels We read in Corinthians, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? ... Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1.Cor. 6:2, 3). It is perhaps regrettable that, in our modern parlance, the word 'judge' often carries with it the idea of condemnation or punishment. The context of 1 Cor. 6, however, makes it clear that the thought here is rather that of decision-making, or, shall we say 'settling affairs'. Paul, we note, was discussing with the Corinthians their deplorable practice of taking their differences, or disputes, before heathen judges, and he is most alarmed that they should even think of such a thing!

Do they not know that God's people shall "judge the angels"? People with such a high calling and destiny should never be running to heathen tribunals to get their problems solved! When we mention angels, of course, we are touching a very big subject, but here we only need to mention one very important point. The Bible makes it clear that God's plan for man is something far greater than anything He had ever planned for angels! We are told that the government of the world to come was not given to angels, but to man (Heb. 2:5).

God's mind is full of man (verse 6), and it is man that has been "crowned with glory and honour" (verse 7). It is true that "for a little while" (verse 7, RV margin) man was placed under angels (as to location and relationship), but that was something like a 'probation period'. We know that even our earthly kings have to spend some of their early years under the care and supervision of carefully chosen tutors who watch over their early training for the great responsibilities that lie ahead.

In the end, however, it is the King that rules! This ascendancy of man over the angels is also seen in the Psalms, where we read, "He shall give His angels charge (orders, Berkeley) over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psa. 91:11). So the angels are, indeed, man's servants! Perhaps we should make it clear that we are here discussing man as originally conceived by God, and not man in his present fallen condition. Sadly, God's thought was lost to the fallen Adam race, but it has been recovered in God's new man-Christ and His redeemed people.

We repeat, then, that God's redeemed people, are, indeed, called to judge angels, "the saints shall judge the world ... we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). All that this entails, and exactly how it will work out, we may not, at present, know. But it is one of those great "things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). And we may be sure that, whatever our appointed task may be, it will be carried out in closest fellowship with Christ, and under His much higher supervision.

Perhaps we are to be given the honour of endorsing His decisions, and pronouncing, and implementing His right verdicts. This would, no doubt, include the judging of those fallen angels mentioned in Jude (verse 6). Even Satan would also be included for he, certainly, is a fallen angel. (See Isa. 14:12-15). Paul told the Roman Christians that the God of Peace would soon crush (NIV) Satan under their feet. (Rom. 16:20). This, however, is a still greater subject, and we only mention it briefly. The simple fact is that God's people shall, indeed, judge angels. It is part of their calling! We now approach what is surely the greatest marvel of them all. Christians are...

Called to be the bride of Christ This is a truth with which most of us have probably been familiar for quite a long time. We have known such Scriptures as Eph. 5:25-27, Rev. 21:2, etc., and may have vaguely accepted them -albeit with a bare minimum of comprehension. More than likely, we have been inclined to regard such ideas as largely poetic, and not to be taken too seriously. Once, we ourselves did just that, but we are now convinced that those Scriptures need to be read and accepted, in a far more realistic and serious way.

The Holy Spirit urges it upon us that Christians are destined to be the Saviour's chosen bride! Quite obviously, details must again elude us, but we may be quite sure that the fulness will far surpass the figure, and the experience will be far greater than the expectation! The very words 'bride' and 'wife' always suggest a closeness of relationship unsurpassed and unsurpassable, and a depth of mutual care and devotion which is beyond all words; it is 'holy ground' indeed, and we must tread carefully.

But, even so this is the relationship which has been appointed and reserved for God's redeemed people in the all-surpassing grace of God. We are to know our Christ, and to enjoy all that He is, in ways that we had never dreamed of! It is all, as Paul said, "a great mystery" (Eph. 5:31, 32), and we can only wait in wonder for the ultimate unfolding. How true it is that God's Christ has loved us with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3), and, from a past eternity, has been "drawing us with cords of a man, and with bands of love" (Hos. 11:4).

We shall now list some of the verses relevant to our subject, and we suggest that they be read quietly and prayerfully, so that something more of their deep significance may be revealed to us. Here are the verses: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:25-27). "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7).

"Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9). "Thy Maker is thine Husband" (Isa. 54:5). "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in justice (RV), and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord" (Hos. 2:19, 20). "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). "Married to Another, even to Him that is raised from the dead" (Rom. 7:4).

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62:5). Perhaps what we all need, here, is a better understanding of the simple statement that "God is love"! (1 John 4:8, 16). It has been dramatically and unmistakably revealed that the great God of eternity, the power Who stands behind all things, is, above all else, a loving God. One of the greatest love stories ever written is that of Jehovah's undying love for the nation of Israel. What can we say of the unprecedented forbearance that is there described; epitomised, perhaps, in the final anguished cry, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" (Hos. 11:8).

That history, we would say, is designed to give us some little idea of the greater love of Christ for his bride, the church! And we are compelled to ask, if that was the love of God for a "crooked and perverse" Israel (Deut. 32:5), what, in the ages to come, will be the love of Christ for a perfected and glorified church? The answer, perhaps, is best spelt out for us at Calvary. Once we begin to comprehend that love, we can only fall at the feet of our Redeemer-Bridegroom, and present ourselves to Him, a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1).

And we may be sure that the One Who gave Himself for us at Calvary, will give Himself to us throughout the ages of eternity. The atoning work of the Cross will then be over, but the very same love that led on to that atoning work will be living on forever, and flowing out to us from our heavenly Bridegroom. All praise to His Name! Before we conclude these meditations, there is one more matter to which we should draw attention. The Bible also tells us that Christians are...

Called to adoption This may sound obscure to some, but, as we proceed, it will become clear. We read in Ephesians, that Christians are "predestinated unto the adoption of children", or, as the Revised Version renders it, "foreordained unto adoption as sons" (Eph. 1:5). To understand this verse, we need to know what the New Testament means by 'adoption'; something very different from our present-day usage of the word. To put it simply, New Testament 'adoption' is, more precisely, a coming of age; shall we say, a transition from 'minor status' to 'major status'.

Among both the Greeks and the Romans, this important occasion was celebrated by an impressive public ceremony. The happy father would take his matured boy (Gk. 'teknon') to the central forum, and, in front of

all the gathered citizens, would take off the lad's boy-garment and replace it with the official man-garment; at the same time proclaiming: "This is my son; he successfully passed through the required training period, and has proved himself worthy to bear his father's name.

He is no more a junior (teknon), but a son (huios), a trusted participant in our society." The Greek term for this whole ceremony was 'huiiothesia', literally a 'son-placing'. In our New Testaments, this term is consistently translated 'adoption'. And we may say that it is with this in view that Christians have been saved and called. Paul no doubt had the same picture in mind when he wrote about the whole creation waiting for what he calls "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

One version puts it, "creation waits expectantly, and longs earnestly, for God's sons to be made known". This is an amazing picture, indeed! God will one day set His sons on the very forum of the universe, and, before all the gathered hosts of heaven, will declare "this is my Son". And all creation will be left wondering! O Lord, speed the day! And we must always remember that adoption is, first and foremost, for the Father's sake; He has planned an "adoption to Himself" (Eph. 1:5), and His will be the great joy in that day.

In the case of that Roman father, while there would certainly have been great joy on the face of the emerging son, we venture to say that the joy of the father would have been far more, and far deeper! For years he had watched over the growing lad, and inwardly shared those necessary disciplines, being himself "afflicted in all those afflictions" (Isa. 63:9). But now he has a son, trained and ready to share in business with him! So, His, in fact, is the greater joy! That, we would say is the main reason why we must press through our 'child-training'.

Our heavenly Father must have that upon which His heart is set. As we now conclude these meditations, we are reminded of a very solemn word in Peter: "Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). Perhaps we have seen something more of our calling; let us now be sure that we do not miss it! The Lord will surely help us if we will look away to Him. All praise to His Name! Some may be asking, now, what is the inmost secret for those who would make their calling and election sure.

In that connection, our minds go back to the verse with which we commenced these meditations, and where we were told that God had "prepared these things for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). That, we would say, is the key to all. We must be lovers of the One Who is calling us! It has been said that "God hunts for our love more ways than one" (Samuel Rutherford). Perhaps one of those ways is by setting such amazing prospects before us. We ask, who could do other than love him when we get these glimpses of the things prepared for us?

Katherine Kelly, in her well-known hymn 'Give me a sight, O Saviour, of Thy wondrous love for me', finishes her song with the lovely words: Then, melt my heart, O Saviour Bend me, yes, break me down Until I own Thee Conqueror And Lord and Sovereign crown. We might well make that our prayer as we see, again, the wonders of our calling. May He, indeed, help us!

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