

God's Eternal Purpose, His Will, His Council, His Work

by Stephen Kaung

The eternal purpose of God is His secret plan to accomplish His will, which He purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world, and it gives us meaning to our lives.

Duration: 1:07:09

Scripture: Genesis 3:9, Exodus 14:21-22, Exodus 16:3, Ephesians 1:9-14, Ephesians 1:19

Topics: "Gods Purpose", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about an elderly lady he met in India who had a unique ministry. Instead of preaching the gospel, she felt led by God to prepare houses in a resort area and serve as a place of rest for God's servants during the summer. The speaker then transitions to discussing the importance of having a deep relationship with God, rather than just knowing about His acts. He uses the example of the Israelites who witnessed God's miracles but quickly forgot and doubted His provision. The speaker emphasizes the need to have a meaningful life and shares how the elderly lady in the story found purpose and transformation through understanding the eternal purpose of God.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the letter to the Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 1, we read from verse 9 through verse 14. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 9. Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fullness of times, to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His good will, that we should be to the praise of His glory, who have pre-trusted in the Christ, in whom we also have trusted, having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance, to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory.

Let's have a further word of prayer. Dear Lord, our hearts do rejoice because we know that Thou art with us, and if Thou art with us, who can be against us? Lord, we do ask Thee to open Thy word to us, make Thy word living and operative in our lives. We pray that Thou will grant us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of God.

Thou knowest that without Thee we can do nothing. Without Thy spirit opening our understanding, Lord, we just cannot comprehend. So we just give ourselves to Thee this morning and pray that Lord, Thou will reveal Thyself to us.

We ask in Thy precious name. Amen. We do want to thank the Lord for gathering us together here again this time.

I personally feel that every time when God's people are gathered together, it is a special time because we are living at the end of the days, and there are many places where God's people are not able to meet as we are. But who are we that He should be so gracious, merciful to us, allowing us to meet in this way? So may the Lord really help us that we will treasure such time, and that He may be able to do whatever He wants to. Everybody knows the theme of this conference is the eternal purpose of God.

When you mention the eternal purpose of God, I do not know how do you feel. Do you feel it is something very remote, far away from you? Do you think it is too theoretical or theological, a subject? Do you feel that it is something so objective that you do not sense any relationship with it? But we need to think about it. How does the eternal purpose of God appeal to you? In a very real sense, the eternal purpose of God is very, very near to you, is much closer to you, probably, than you think.

It is something so intimate that you cannot avoid it. You are ignoring it, even without your knowing it. It is nothing theoretical.

It is the most practical thing in the whole world. It is not theological at all. It is very personal.

Every one of us is involved in that eternal purpose of God. And it is tremendously important for us to know the eternal purpose of God. I think, brothers and sisters, we all desire long to know our God.

Now how are we going to know God? What is the best way to know God? What is the direct road to the knowledge of God? It is by knowing God's will, God's purpose. We remember, the psalmist said, in Psalm 103, verse 7, God has made known to Israel his acts, but he made known his ways to Moses. The children of Israel, they only know the acts of God.

When God does something to them, then they know God. But Moses knew God much better than the children of Israel, because he knew the ways of God. How will God work? There are certain principles behind God's action.

And he knew these principles. But dear brothers and sisters, we who are in the New Testament time, by the grace of God, we can go even a step further. We can know God's will, God's purpose.

And knowing God's purpose is really knowing God. So I believe that it should be the deepest longing of our hearts to know God's eternal purpose. Knowing God's purpose gives us meaning to our lives.

We know that God created man with a purpose. And if we do not know that purpose, our life is meaningless. And that's the reason why you find in the world today, most people live in this world without knowing the meaning of life.

They are just grouping around. But once you know God's eternal purpose, it gives you the real meaning of life. You will begin to see life is worth living.

And you will be given the understanding of living in a way that is worthwhile. I remember back in 1942, I was in India. And I met an elderly lady.

And she told me a little bit of her life. She was in India doing something that is most unusual. She was not there as an ordinary missionary, preaching the gospel.

But she felt led of the Lord to go to India to prepare some places in the best resort area in India, Nigari Hills. She will set up some houses. And she will have servants and maids, beautiful English gardens.

And her ministry was every summer, she will receive God's servants to her home and let them rest. And she will just serve them. That's her ministry.

Now how did it come about? She told me. She came from a very rich family. Her parents were millionaires.

And she was married to a title man. And while her parents were living, she used to travel with her parents all around the world. And after her parents died, and her husband died, she was left alone.

She was a Christian. She loved the Lord. She lived in Italy.

She has a marble palace there. And every summer, she will go back to England to attend the Kazakh convention. But she felt life was meaningless.

She had everything, but it was meaningless. She didn't know what to do. But one year, she went back to England, and she attended a swanic conference.

That was Mrs. Penn Lewis conference, before the Kazakh convention. And while she was attending that conference, she said she heard a young man speaking on the eternal purpose of God. And God opened her understanding.

She began to realize the real meaning of life. That transformed her. And she gave her life to the Lord.

And she was led of the Lord to India, to do such a work. Dear brothers and sisters, do you feel your life lacks meaning? Why are you here? Why God created you? Why God saved you? What is the meaning of your being here? Unless your life is linked to the eternal purpose of God, life is meaningless. It's not worth living.

But once you see your life is related to God's eternal purpose, you know the full meaning of life. And by the grace of God, you can live to the fullest of the life that God has given to you. So you see, it is very personal.

It is very important. Not only it is important to your own personal life, but knowing God's eternal purpose explains everything to you. In our lives, in our days, many things are happening.

And all the time we wonder, why? Why God allows these things to happen? What are the meanings of all these things? Some people even blame God for allowing all these tragic things happening around us. And even something happening to us. Why? The answer is in knowing the eternal purpose of God.

God has a purpose. And He works out everything according to His purpose. Sometimes we may not be able to know the particular meaning or explanation of a thing.

But we do know that there is the eternal purpose of God behind everything. His purpose controls everything. Big things, small things.

International, national, personal. Whatever it may be, the explanation lies in the eternal purpose of God. You know, brothers and sisters, even among Christians, we are need-oriented.

Wherever you go, you are looking forward to hear something that will supply your need. Wherever meeting you go, your desire is that your need may be met. We are need-oriented.

And if we are need-oriented, brothers and sisters, one need is met and another need comes forth. There is never ending. It is like the children of Israel going through the wilderness.

Just going round and round and round and you never reach the end. We are not purpose-oriented. We need to be purpose-oriented.

And if we are purpose-oriented, we will be lifted out of ourselves. You know, we are just centred upon our petty little self. How can we be delivered from self-centredness? We are delivered from self-centredness.

We are lifted into the eternal purpose of God. It enlarges us. It broadens our horizon.

Instead of looking at ourselves and at our need all the time and cry out, who can supply my need? We are being brought to God's side and to see His purpose. And how can His purpose be fulfilled? That will be our aspiration. Knowing the eternal purpose of God will give us the discipline that we need.

You know, we are a very undisciplined people. Where can we get the right discipline? We are disciplined by the eternal purpose of God. And knowing the eternal purpose of God, then we are able to work with God.

Instead of working against God. You know, the apostle Paul, before he knew God's eternal purpose, saw autocracy. He thought he was serving God by persecuting the believers of Jesus Christ with sincerity.

And yet how mistaken he was. Brothers and sisters, if we do not know God's eternal purpose, maybe unconsciously, even while you are in God's work, you are seemingly serving God, but actually you are opposing God. So how important it is that we know God's eternal purpose and then we will be able to work with God.

So dear brothers and sisters, there are many more reasons, I believe, why we must know God's eternal purpose. Why is it so essential to us? It is not something that we can live without. The reason why you find Christian life today is so shallow, it is because we lack the true knowledge of God's eternal purpose.

The apostle Paul, he wrote in the letter to the Ephesians. He said, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself. Now as an introduction, there are three things we would like to consider this morning.

One is God's will, or God's purpose. Second is God's counsel, or God's ways. And the third is God's work.

God is the supreme will in the universe. Our God is not impersonal. He is a person.

Why? Because He has a will. We serve a personal living God. He is the supreme will in the universe.

He wills whatever He wants to will. The Bible tells us that He wills according to His good pleasure. Whatever pleases Him, He wills it.

He does not need to consult anybody. He does not need to get approval from anyone, because He is sovereign. He can will whatever He wants to, but He wills always according to His good pleasure.

That which pleases Him, that which satisfies Him. And we know God is love. That is His very nature.

And because He is love, therefore whatever He wills, He wills out of His love. And what He has willed satisfies His loving character. Our God is good.

Therefore whatever He wills must be good. Our God is perfect. So whatever He wills must be perfect.

And that's the reason why in Romans chapter twelve, you'll find if we present our bodies a living sacrifice, then our mind will be renewed, and then we will be able to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. It is because our mind is deranged. Therefore, sometimes we think the will of God is bad.

You know at one time, when I was working with young people, I asked young people, what do you think is the will of God? How do you know this is the will of God? Well one answer is, whatever is against me is the will of God. It is not good. Not acceptable.

Not because God's will is not good and perfect and acceptable. It is because our mind has not been renewed. Whatever comes out of God must be perfect.

Thank God for His will. And out of that will comes His purpose. The Bible said He purposed in Himself, even before the foundation of the world.

There before He created the world. Before there was time, God exercised His will. According to His good pleasure.

And He purposed, a purpose in Himself. There was nobody there. He was all by Himself.

So He can only purpose in Himself. And that purpose, that will, the Bible called it, the mystery of His will. Now why is it called a mystery? You know a mystery doesn't mean something mysterious.

Something bad. No. Mystery simply means a secret.

God has a secret. He secretly made up His mind. Even before the creation of the world.

And He kept His secret so well. You know we, we are not able to keep any secret. Especially if that secret is so glorious, so good, so perfect, so pleasing.

We cannot keep it back. We want to tell it to all. But God knows how to keep secret.

He has a top secret. And He has hidden it in Himself throughout the ages and generations. Until the fullness of time.

A secret waits to be revealed. Sometimes we say the greatest mystery in the world is God. Now who knows God? He is so above us.

He is unlimited, infinite. How can we know Him? So no wonder with the Greek, they have an altar called the unknown God. God cannot be known.

In one sense that's true. But in another sense, thank God. He can be known.

Why? Because He loves to be known. A mystery, a secret, waits to be revealed. There's only one way to know a secret.

And that is when it is revealed. Brothers and sisters, we do not know God. He is way beyond us.

So far as our natural man is concerned. There is no way we can know Him. But thank God.

Even though His will is a mystery. And He has hidden it throughout the generations and the ages. And yet, He is just waiting for the right moment to reveal it.

In the fullness of time, He reveals it. Our God is not a God who hides Himself. You remember in Genesis chapter 16, Haggai, he fled from her mistress.

And an angel of the Lord met her and told her to go back. And she will bear a son, shall be called Ishmael. And God will bless her.

And then you find Haggai said, He is the God who reveals. He has revealed Himself to me. Our God is a God who reveals Himself.

In Galatians chapter 1, verse 15, the apostle Paul said, it has pleased God to reveal His Son in me. So you know that our God has a secret. And He is able to keep His secret.

But until the right time. And the secret will be revealed. So brothers and sisters, when we come into this matter of the eternal purpose of God.

Remember one thing. We need revelation. Without the spirit of wisdom and revelation, we are not able to enter into God's eternal purpose.

We are not able to get that true knowledge of God. So we need to cast ourselves upon the Lord. Not trying to depend upon our own ability.

I think from the very outset, we need to have a right attitude. As we are faced with the eternal purpose of God, we need to acknowledge that so far as we ourselves are concerned, this is something beyond us. No matter how we try, we will not be able to really understand it and experience it.

We need revelation from God. We are utterly dependent upon God to reveal His purpose, His will, Himself, to us. But one thing we are assured, that it pleases Him to reveal.

You know, if in your family, you have a newborn son, and somebody visiting your family, he does not need to ask. You will tell the secret, because it is something so dear to your heart. You know, God loves to tell the secret, but unfortunately we are not prepared.

So He has to use all kinds of ways to prepare for it, before it can be revealed. Then we appreciate it. So anyway, brothers and sisters, we find that God is the supreme will.

And out of that will, He purposed a purpose. It is in a singular number of purpose. Not just many purposes, but one overall, all-inclusive purpose.

God purposed that purpose in Himself, before the foundation of the world. So you can see how important that purpose is. How great that purpose is.

How much it means to God, of that purpose. You know, brothers and sisters, when we were created, God created us with a will too. Because He made us according to His own image.

He is the supreme will. And He also created us with a will. And God wants us to will His will.

Because of sin, that enter into this world. Our will, naturally, will be against God's will. Our purpose will be naturally against God's purpose.

But thank God, by His salvation, we who are saved by the grace of God, we today should surrender our will to God's will. We should purpose God's purpose. That is what we should do.

You remember Daniel. When Daniel was a young man, probably in his teens, how he was taken as hostage to Babylon. And yet, the Bible says, he purposed in his heart, not to be polluted by the king's food and the king's drink.

In other words, he purposed a purpose in himself. To keep himself pure for God. He purposed the purpose of God for him.

And because of that purpose, you remember how God honored his purpose. How God gave him wisdom, understanding, and how God greatly used him. Because his life is linked with the purpose of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are all living beings. We all have our will. We all made our purposes.

But has our will been surrendered to God? God respects our will. He creates our will so He respects it. He would never force us to do anything.

And if we insist on our own will, even though He tried to rescue us, but He respects our will. Therefore it is very important for us to surrender our will to God's will. Because we know that His will is perfect.

And if we surrender our will to His will, then we will purpose our purpose according to His purpose. I think this is very important. God not only has a will of purpose.

Now what that purpose is, I'll leave it to my brother Lance. But anyway you'll find after God made a purpose, then it follows with a counsel. In verse 11 it tells us, according to His counsel.

In other words, God not only has a will and has made a giant purpose, but after that purpose is made, He also laid a plan, a counsel, a way. How can that purpose be accomplished? You know we do things sometimes by chance. We do not have a plan.

And some people even boast that they have no plan. Now if you do not have a plan, then you'll find somebody will plan for you. You will be just moved by your circumstances.

And somebody is behind it. God never does anything by chance. He plans very carefully.

He plans every step of the way until that purpose is realized. You know what is time? Time is God's workshop. God created time to work out His plan.

Time is important to God. And He uses time to perform what He has purposed. So that's why the Bible said, for the administration of the fullness of the times.

God divides the time into times, into periods of times. And at each period of time, He is working something towards the fulfillment of His purpose. Now His purpose is so gigantic, so glorious, so immense, so it takes all the times to work this thing.

The word administration, in some versions you will find management. Now the word means management of household or household affairs. God is managing His house.

He is managing His household affairs. It is the administration of His own affairs. It is the dispensations, the periods of time that He works out into fullness, His purpose.

That's the reason why you will find even in the very beginning, because God has that purpose in Him before the foundation of the world. So, He began to plan for it. And the first thing He did, He created.

God created all things according to that purpose. In the beginning, God created. And then God created man in His own image, according to His likeness.

Why? The answer is, according to that purpose. And then throughout the Old Testament, you can read through the Old Testament, and you will find how God gradually worked out His plan during the patriarch age. How He called one man, Abraham.

How He got a nation, Israel. How He worked with that nation, and how He brought in the Messiah, the Redeemer, in the fullness of time. So you will find that God just gradually working out all His plan.

He never missed a point. You know, Israel, they only know the acts of God. When God brought them through the Red Sea, they saw the miracle.

The sea opened, and they walked through on dry land. Oh, they praise God. They worship God.

God is good. And then soon they forgot. When they had no food to eat, they said, can God provide? Set a table in a wilderness? Is God able to do that? Immediately you find they began to doubt.

Because all they know is the act of God. Very shallow knowledge of God. But then God, Moses, knew God in a deeper way.

Because he had a life with God. You know, sometimes I wonder, when Moses went to the mountain and received from the hand of God the two tables of law, these stones were made by God Himself. And God's finger printed the word on these two tables of stones.

How precious this must be. And then when Moses came down and he saw the children of Israel, how they worshiped the golden calf, Moses smashed his two stones. Sometimes I wonder, did he do something wrong? How dare him destroy the very hand work of God? Now probably he was angry.

But maybe he had sinned. Why did he do that? Because he knew the ways of God. He knew God was righteous.

And because God was righteous, if people sinned against God and violated his law, punishment would follow. Severe punishment. And he made the children of Israel drink the water where the golden calf became powders and threw on the water and asked them to drink it.

Drink your own sin. And further than that, he stood at the gate of the camp and said, who is on the Lord's side? Come and go from one gate to another gate and slay everyone that you meet, whoever he may be. Why? Why are all these things Moses commanded the children of Israel to do? Why? Because he knows the way of God.

He knows God is so righteous. God's righteousness has to be vindicated. It cannot be compromised.

And yet, immediately afterwards, he went up to the mountain and pleaded for the children of Israel. Why? Because he knew God is merciful. Brothers and sisters, if we know the ways of God, then we are able to work together.

Otherwise, we will not be able to work with God. So how important it is, again, that we may know his counsel. Now, when you think of the counsel of God, of course, in the scripture you'll find, for instance, in Romans chapter 11, it says, oh, the depths of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are your judgments. How untraceable are your ways. Who has been your counselor? Does God need to ask anybody anything? The wisdom of God.

But thank God, we are able to know his ways. We are able to know his counsel. And because of that, we are able to work together with him.

Just recently, I read something that dear brother Sparks spoke in Manila in 1964. And he said, it is important to know God's purpose. But, if you only know God's purpose, and you do not know God's way, the way to that purpose, it is useless.

We need not only to know God's purpose, we also need to know God's ways, his counsel. And then, finally, the third thing is work. God works.

He works according to the counsel of his will, that that purpose may be. Our God is a working God. You remember the Lord Jesus said, in John chapter 5, verse 17, My Father worketh his atonement, and I work.

You see, God has been working ever since. After he created the heavens and the earth. After he created man, he was supposed to have his rest now.

Because on the seventh day, he rested. He looked at everything, he said, wonderful. But, very soon, his rest was broken.

Our forefather Adams and Eve, they sing in the garden of Eden. And God began to work again. Adam, where are you? God began to come to seek and to find the lost.

And how God called Abraham, how God worked with the children of Israel, and how God even sent his only begotten son into this world. And he has been working ever since. Our God works.

And he works according to the might of his strength. That exceeding great power. In Ephesians, chapter 1, we are told, If our eyes be opened, we will see the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe.

According to the might of his strength, in raising up Christ from the dead, and seated him on high at his right hand, and put everything under his feet. Brothers and sisters, that's the working power of God. God can answer us exceedingly above, all that we can even ask or think of, to the glory of God.

So, we do see, God has a glorious purpose. And that purpose is made out of love. And God lays down a plan, according to his wisdom.

And now God works with his power, exceeding great power, to fulfill that purpose. So, can you doubt that his purpose will fail? His purpose will be realized. But, to us, we need also to know that power.

If we want to work together with God, if we want to be in that plan, for that purpose, then brothers and sisters, we need to know the power of God. The apostle Paul, he knows the power of God in his own life. You remember, in 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, when he had that thorn in his body.

How he pleaded with God to remove that thorn. It's at stake, to remove it, that he may be strong. And yet, God said, my grace is sufficient for you.

In other words, in his weakness, he experienced the power of God. The reason why we do not experience the power of God is because we are too strong. Our problem is not weakness.

Our problem is strength. If we realize our weakness, even to the point of boasting of our weakness, not in the wrong way, but boasting our weakness, then we will experience the exceeding great power of God. You know, we are an earthen vessel, but there is a treasure within us that the surpassing greatness of power may be of God and not of ourselves.

Paul, even in his labor, how he tore and labored in the power of God. So, dear brothers and sisters, we need to know how to work with God. We need his power that we may be able to be used by God in bringing his purpose into fullness.

So, dear brothers and sisters, actually, we are here with something tremendously great before us. It is not just a small conference. It is something that touches eternity.

It is something that touches the eternal purpose of God. And thank God he is drawing us into that purpose. We are in that purpose, and we need to know what that purpose is.

We need to work together with him. Allow him to work it out in us and through us until his glory is manifested. So, may the Lord prepare our hearts for this time.

Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we do praise and thank Thee that Thou art willing to share with us Thy very heart. We want to thank Thee that Thou dost desire that we may be men and women of Thy heart, that we may know Thy heart, and we may allow Thee to work that out in us and even through us, that Thy purpose of eternity may become a reality. Lord, we want to offer ourselves to Thee for Thy purpose.

Have mercy upon us. In Thy precious name, Amen.

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