

# Eternal Purpose (Reading)

by Watchman Nee

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*The eternal purpose of God is to make Christ the firstborn son among many glorified sons, and to bring many sons unto glory through the new birth and sufferings.*

**Duration:** 27:40

**Scripture:** Luke 15:4

**Topics:** "Surrender To God", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of truly giving oneself to God. He explains that when we offer ourselves to God, He will break us in order to bless and use us for His purposes. This process may involve difficulties and challenges, but it is necessary for us to fulfill God's plan for our lives. The ultimate goal of God's creation and redemption is to bring glory to Himself and to His children.

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## Transcript

And this occurs five times in verses 13, 16, and 19. Many have taken this word present to imply consecration without looking carefully into its content. Of course, that is what it does mean, but not in the sense in which we so often understand it.

It is not the consecration of our old man with his instincts and resources, and natural wisdom, strengths, and other gifts to the Lord for him to use. This will be at once clear from verse 13. Note there the clause, as alive from the dead.

Paul says, present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead. This defines for us the point at which consecration begins. For what is here referred to is not the consecration of anything belonging to the old creation, but only of that which is passed through death to resurrection.

The presenting spoken of is the outcome of my knowing my old man to be crucified. Knowing, reckoning, presenting to God. That is the divine order.

When I really know I am crucified with him, then spontaneously I reckon myself dead. And when I know that I am raised with him from the dead, then likewise I reckon myself alive unto God in Christ Jesus. For both the death and the resurrection side of the cross are to be accepted by faith.

When this point is reached, giving myself to him follows. In resurrection, he is the source of my life. Indeed, he is my life.

So I cannot but present everything to him, for all is his, not mine. But without passing through death, I have nothing to consecrate. Nor is there anything God can accept.

For he has condemned all that is of the old creation to the cross. Death has cut off all that cannot be consecrated to him. And resurrection alone has made consecration possible.

Presenting myself to God means that henceforth, I consider my whole life as now belonging to the Lord. Let us observe that this presenting relates to the members of my body. That body which, as we saw earlier, is now unemployed in respect of sin.

Present yourselves and your members, says Paul. And again, present your members. God requires of me that I now regard all my members, all my faculties, as belonging wholly to him.

It is a great thing when I discover I am no longer my own, but his. If the 10 shillings in my pocket belong to me, then I have full authority over them. But if they belong to another who has committed them to me in trust, then I cannot buy what I please with them.

And I dare not lose them. Real Christian life begins with knowing this. How many of us know that because Christ is risen, we are therefore alive unto God, and not unto ourselves? How many of us dare not use our time or money or talents as we would, because we realize they are the Lord's, not ours? How many of us have such a strong sense that we belong to another, that we dare not squander a shilling of our money, or an hour of our time, or any of our mental or physical powers? On one occasion, a Chinese brother was traveling by train, and found himself in a carriage together with three non-Christians who wished to play cards in order to while away the time.

Lacking a fourth to complete the game, they invited this brother to join them. I'm sorry to disappoint you, he said, but I cannot join your game, for I've not brought my hands with me. Whatever do you mean, they asked in blank astonishment.

This pair of hands does not belong to me, he said. And then there followed the explanation of the transfer of ownership that had taken place in his life. That brother regarded the members of his body as belonging entirely to the Lord.

That is true holiness. Paul says, present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification, holiness. Make it a definite act, present yourselves unto God.

What is holiness? Many people think we're become holy by the eradication of something evil within. No. We become holy by being separated unto God.

In Old Testament times, it was when a man was chosen by God to be altogether his, that he was publicly anointed with oil and was then said to be sanctified. Thereafter, he was regarded as set apart to God. In the same manner, even animals or material things, a lamb or the gold of the temple could be sanctified, not by the eradication of anything evil in them, but by being thus reserved exclusively to the Lord.

Holiness, in the Hebrew sense, meant something thus set apart. And all true holiness is holiness to the Lord. I give myself over wholly to Christ.

That is holiness. Presenting myself to God implies a recognition that I am altogether his. This giving of myself is a definite thing, just as definite as reckoning.

There must be a day in my life when I pass out of my own hands into his. And from that day forward, I belong to him and no longer to myself. That does not mean that I consecrate myself to be a preacher or a missionary.

Alas, many people are missionaries, not because they have truly consecrated themselves to God, but because in the sense of which we are speaking, they have not consecrated themselves to him. They have consecrated, as they would put it, something altogether different, namely, their own uncrucified natural faculties to the doing of his work. But that is not true consecration.

Then to what are we to be consecrated? Not to the Christian work, but to the will of God to be and do whatever he wants. Lord, I give myself to thee with this desire alone, to know and walk in the path thou hast ordained. That is true giving.

If at the close of a life we can say with Paul, I have finished my course, then we are blessed indeed. There is nothing more tragic than to come to the end of life and know that we have been on the wrong course. We have only one life to live down here, and we're free to do as we please with it.

But if we seek our own pleasure, our life will never glorify God. A devoted Christian once said in my hearing, I want nothing for myself, I want everything for God. Do you want anything apart from God? Or does all your desire center in his will? Can you truly say that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect to you? For it is our wills that are in question here.

That strong, self-assertive will of mine must go to the cross, and I must give myself over wholly to the Lord. We cannot expect a tailor to make a coat if we do not give him any cloth, nor a builder to build us a house if we let him have no building material. And in just the same way, we cannot expect the Lord to live out his life in us if we do not give him our lives in which to live.

Without reservations, without controversy, we must give ourselves to him to do as he pleases with us, present yourselves unto God. If we give ourselves unreservedly to God, many adjustments may have to be made in family or business or church relationships, or in the matter of our personal views. God will not let anything of ourselves remain.

His finger will touch point by point everything that is not of him, and he will say, this must go. Are you willing? Are you willing? It is foolish to resist God, and always wise to submit to him. We'll admit that many of us still have controversies with the Lord.

He wants something while we want something else. Many things we dare not look into, dare not pray about, dare not even think about, lest we lose our peace. We can avoid the issue in that way, but to do so will bring us out of the will of God.

It is always an easy matter to get out of his will, but it is a blessed thing just to hand ourselves over to him and let him have his way with us. How good it is to have the consciousness that we belong to the Lord and are not our own. There is nothing more precious in the world.

It is that which brings the awareness of his continual presence, and the reason is obvious. I must first have the sense of God's possession of me before I can have the sense of his presence with me. When once his ownership is established, then I dare do nothing in my own interests, for I am his exclusive property.

Know ye not that to whom you present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey. Okay, the word here rendered servant really signifies a bond servant, a slave. The word is used several times in the second half of Romans six.

What is the difference between a servant and a slave? A servant may serve another, but the ownership does not pass to that other. If he likes his master, he can serve him, but if he does not like him, he can give him his notice and seek another master. Not so is it with the slave.

He is not only the servant of another, but he is the possession of another. How did I become the slave of the Lord? On his part, he bought me, and on my part, I presented myself to him. By right of redemption, I am God's property, but if I would be his slave, I must willingly give myself to him, for he will never compel me to do so.

The trouble about many Christians today is that they have an insufficient idea of what God is asking of them. How glibly they say, Lord, I am willing for anything. Do you know that God is asking of you your very life? There are cherished ideals, strong wills, precious relationships, much loved work that will have to go.

So do not give yourself to God unless you mean it. God will take you seriously, even if you did not mean it seriously. When the Galilean boy brought his bread to the Lord, what did the Lord do with it? He broke it.

God will always break what is offered to him. He breaks what he takes, but after breaking it, he blesses and uses it to meet the needs of others. After you give yourself to the Lord, he begins to break what was offered to him.

Everything seems to go wrong, and you protest and find fault with the ways of God. But to stay there is to be no more than just a broken vessel, no good for the world, because you've gone too far for the world to use you. And no good for God either, because you've not gone far enough for him to use you.

You are out of gear with the world, and you have a controversy with God. This is the tragedy of many a Christian. My giving of myself to the Lord must be an initial fundamental act.

Then day by day, I must go on giving to him, not finding fault with his use of me, but accepting with praise even what the flesh revolts against. I am the Lord's, and now no longer reckon myself to be my own, but acknowledge in everything his ownership and authority. That is the attitude God requires, and to maintain it is true consecration.

I do not consecrate myself to be a missionary or a preacher. I consecrate myself to God to do his will where I am, be it in school, office, or kitchen, counting whatever he ordains for me to be the very best, for nothing but good can come to those who are wholly his. May we always be possessed by the consciousness that we are not our own.

We have spoken of the need of revelation, of faith, and of consecration, if we are to live the normal Christian life. But unless we see the end God has in view, we shall never clearly understand why these steps are necessary to lead us to that end. Before, therefore, we consider further the question of inward experience, let us first look at the great divine goal before us.

What is God's purpose in creation? And what is his purpose in redemption? It may be summed up in two phrases, one from each of our two sections of Romans. It is the glory of God and the glory of the children of God. In Romans 3.23, we read, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

God's purpose for man is glory, but sin thwarted that purpose by causing man to miss God's glory. When we think of sin, we instinctively think of the judgment it brings. We invariably associate it with condemnation and hell.

Man's thought is always of the punishment that will come to him if he sins. But God's thought is always of the glory man will miss if he sins. The result of sin is that we forfeit God's glory.

The result of redemption is that we are qualified again for glory. God's purpose in redemption is glory, glory, glory. This consideration takes us forward into Romans 8, where the topic is developed in verses 16 to 18, and again in verses 29 and 30.

Paul says, we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him, then we may be also glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us, Lord.

And again, whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And whom he foreordained, them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified.

And whom he justified, them he also glorified. What was God's objective? It was that his son, Jesus Christ, might be the firstborn among many brethren, all of whom should be conformed to his image. How did God realize that objective? Whom he justified, them he also glorified.

God's purpose then in creation and redemption was to make Christ the firstborn son among many glorified sons. That may perhaps at first convey very little to many of us, but let us look into it more carefully. In John 1, 14, we're told that the Lord Jesus was God's only begotten son.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father. That he was God's only begotten son signifies that God had no other son but this one. He was with the Father from all eternity.

But we are told, God was not satisfied that Christ should remain the only begotten son. He wanted also to make him his first begotten. How could an only begotten son become a first begotten? The answer is simple, by the Father having more children.

If you have but one son, then he is the only begotten. But if thereafter you have other children, then the only begotten becomes the first begotten. The divine purpose in creation and redemption was that God should have many children.

He wanted us and could not be satisfied without us. In reading the story of the prodigal son, most people are impressed with all the troubles the prodigal meet. They're occupied in thinking what a bad time he's having.

That is not the point of the parable. My son was lost and is found. There is the heart of the story.

It's not a question of what the son suffers, but of what the father loses. He is the sufferer, he is the loser. A sheep that is lost, whose is the lost? The shepherd's.

A coin is lost, whose is the lost? The woman's. A son is lost, whose is the lost? The father's. That is the lesson of Luke chapter 15.

The Lord Jesus was the only begotten son. And as the only begotten, he had no brothers. But the father sent the son, in order that the only begotten might also be the first begotten.

And the beloved son have many brethren. There you have the whole story of the incarnation and the cross. And there you have at the last the purpose of God fulfilled in his bringing many sons unto glory.

But how could God's only begotten son become his first begotten? The method is explained in John 12, 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone. But if it die, it beareth much fruit.

Who was that grain? It was the Lord Jesus. In the whole universe, God had only one grain of wheat. He had no second grain.

God put his one grain of wheat into the ground and it died. And in resurrection, the only begotten grain became the first begotten grain. And from the one grain, there have sprung many grains.

In respect of his divinity, the Lord Jesus remains uniquely the only begotten son of God. Yet there is a sense in which from the resurrection onward through all eternity, he is also the first begotten. And his life from that time is found in many brethren.

For we who are born of the spirit are made thereby partakers of the divine nature, though not, mark you, as of ourselves, but only, as we shall see in a moment, in dependence upon God and by virtue of our being in Christ. We have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

It was by way of the incarnation and the cross that the Lord Jesus made this possible. Therein was the Father heart of God satisfied. For in the Son's obedience unto death, the Father has secured his many sons.

The first and the 20th chapters of John are in this respect most precious. In the beginning of his gospel, John tells us that Jesus was the only begotten from the Father. At the end of his gospel, he tells us how after the Lord Jesus died and rose again, he said to Mary Magdalene, go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father and my God and your God.

Hitherto in this gospel, the Lord had spoken often of the Father or of my Father. Now in resurrection, he adds, and your Father. It is the eldest son, the first begotten speaking.

By his death and resurrection, many brethren have been brought into God's family. And so in the same verse, he uses this very name for them, my brethren. He's not ashamed to call them brethren.

Christ arose in new form with a body still, but in the spirit, no longer in the flesh. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The Lord Jesus now has a resurrected body, a spiritual body, a glorious body.

And since he is no longer in the flesh, he can now be received by all. He that eateth me, he also shall live because of me, said Jesus. Now that he is in the spirit, every one of us can receive him.

And it is by partaking of his resurrection life that we are constituted children of God. As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, which were born of God. God is not out to reform our life.

It is not his thought to bring it to a certain stage of refinement, for it is on a totally wrong plane. On that plane, he cannot now bring man to glory. He must have a new man, one born anew, born of God.

Regeneration and justification go together. What we today possess in Christ is more than Adam lost. Adam was only a developed man.

He remained on that plane and never possessed the life of God. But we who receive the son of God, not only receive the forgiveness of sins, we receive also the divine life, which was represented in the garden by the tree of life. By the new birth, we receive something Adam never had.

We possess what he missed. God wants sons who shall be joint heirs with Christ in glory. That is his goal.

But how can we bring that about? Turn now to Hebrews chapter two, verses 10 and 11. It became him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

For Jesus as man derived his life from God and in another sense, but just as truly, we derive our new life from God. He was begotten of the Holy Ghost and we were born of the Spirit, born of God. So God says we are all of one.

Do you realize that we have the same life today that God has? The life which he has in heaven is the life which he has imparted to us here on the earth. That is the precious gift of God. It is for that reason that we can live a life of holiness for it is not our own life that has been changed, but the life of God that has been imparted to us.

Do you notice that in this consideration of the eternal purpose, the whole question of sin ultimately goes out? It no longer has a place. Sin came in with Adam and even when it had been dealt with as it has to be, we are only brought back to the point where Adam was. But in relating us again to the divine purpose, in as it were, restoring to us access to the tree of life, redemption has given us far more than Adam ever had.

It has made us partakers of the very life of God himself.

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