

WCCC 2000

God's Eternal Purpose and the Overcomers (3)

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Ephesians 1: 11 – 14

*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 own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ: in whom you 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.*

Colossians 1: 21 – 29

*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of His flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it, if indeed you abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings you have heard, which have been proclaimed in the whole creation which is under heaven of which I Paul became minister. Now I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the assembly; of which I became minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me towards you to complete the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to His saints; to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you the hope of glory; whom we announce, admonishing every man, and teaching every man,*

*in all wisdom, to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ. Whereunto also I toil, combating according to His working, which works in me in power.*

Dear Heavenly Father, we want to thank Thee again that Thou do gather us together this evening. We do gather in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And we realize that Thou are here with us. Lord, speak for Thy servant hears. We ask in Thy precious name, Amen.

The theme of this conference is 'God's eternal purpose and the overcomers'. My responsibility is on God's eternal purpose concerning His Son. During the first session, we spent some time together on the matter of purpose. We find that purpose is most essential in our life because purpose gives us the meaning of life. Not only is it important but the kind of purpose we purpose is also important because the kind of purpose we purpose made us the kind of person we are. And there is no purpose nobler or higher than to purpose God's own purpose. It is the will of God that our purpose is one with God's purpose. And that alone will give us the meaning of life. Even before the foundation of the world, God purposed a purpose in Himself. We mentioned again and again that God is a God of purpose. He never does anything by chance. And there in Him is one purpose which is a purpose that embraces all other purposes. That purpose governs all the other purposes. He purposed that purpose before the foundation of the world. And He purposed it according to His own good pleasure. As a matter of fact, He has never told anyone about that purpose, and this is called the mystery of the ages. And according to the purpose that He made, He laid a plan which is called the counsel of His will. After He laid down such a plan, He works according to that plan with all His power towards the realization of that purpose. This purpose is made in eternity past. But when He works out His purpose, it is within a time and the

fulfillment will be into eternity to come. This mystery has now been revealed to us. And it has been revealed to us who are His own. So today every believer should know this purpose because it is God's will for us to know it. If God is to keep it away from us, no one has the ability to even guess what that purpose is. But since God has revealed it, we have a responsibility. God will hold us responsible to know this purpose. There is no excuse to say that we do not know what His purpose is and therefore we cannot walk accordingly. Dear brothers and sisters, whenever there is a revelation there is a responsibility. So when we receive this revelation, we are held responsible to it.

What is that purpose? That purpose is 'in the fullness of time, God will sum up all things in His Son'. Or in some version it said, 'to head up all things in His Son, that His Son may be the head over all things, that everything will express Him and everything will glorify His Son'. This is God's eternal purpose. So when it is revealed, it is very simple. In the very heart of God, you can only see one person, His own beloved Son. And because He loves His Son so much, He will do everything for His Son. You know, we, human beings, even though we are very small, yet somehow, we feel that we are very important. We are very self-important. So even when we come to spiritual things, we even think we are in the center of God's heart. 'God so loved the world' – that makes us very important. But if you take a closer look into the heart of God, you find that you are not there. It is true that God so loved the world, but you are not there. In the heart of God, you see only His beloved Son. But we are there in the heart of God's beloved Son. So brothers and sisters, during the second session, we shared together the purpose of God's eternal purpose and that is to behold the Son. We find that in relation to God, He is the image of the invisible God. He made the invisible God visible. He is the perfect representation and manifestation of God. If we see Him, we see the Father because He comes to declare the Father

to us. He is with God and He is God. He and the Father are one. That is our Lord Jesus. So far as His relationship with creation is concerned, He is the firstborn of all creation. He is the one that creation comes into being. Creation takes its character from Him because all things are created in Him and by Him and for Him. The whole creation comes out of Him and returns to Him and that includes you and me. We come out of Him and return to Him. We are His forever. So far as the new creation is concerned, He is the head of the body. We who believe in the Lord Jesus are one body. We are in one spirit baptized into one body regardless of Jews or gentiles. But our head is our Lord Jesus. The body comes out of the head. The body is under the head. And the body is to grow into the head. He is the beginning of the new creation and He is the firstborn from among the dead. The church today is on resurrection ground because He is the firstborn from among the dead. All these things are for one reason. All these relationships are for one reason. That He may have the first place in all things. That is He is the first, the last and all in between. It is God's purpose that Christ be all and in all.

And you find such revelations all over in the bible. The whole bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ. On the day of His resurrection, two disciples left Jerusalem and went to Emmaus because they were disappointed. The one whom they believed in, the one as the prophet and as the one that God sent had been crucified and was buried. Their hopes were smashed. In their disappointment, they left Jerusalem and went to Emmaus. And suddenly another man came and walked with them. The bible said our Lord appeared to them in another form. That was why they did not recognize Him. The stranger asked them why they were so sad. They said 'you are in Jerusalem and you did not know why and what happened'? And they told Him about how the prophet, the messiah, was crucified. The stranger said 'how slow is your faith'. And He opened the bible to them. And He showed them everything from Moses through Psalms that referred to

Him. And while He was explaining to them, their hearts grew warm. And after they arrived at Emmaus, this stranger seemed to be going forward. They forced Him to stay back and while they were having the meal, the stranger broke bread and gave to them. And suddenly their eyes were opened. It was the Lord. It gave them strength to go back to Jerusalem. And there you find the Lord appeared to the disciples who gathered in that house. And our Lord again went through with Moses and the Psalms on everything that spoke of Him. So you find the whole Old Testament is the revelation of Jesus Christ. And of course, the entire New Testament is also a revelation of Jesus Christ. God wants us to see Him and to be fully filled with Him. And the will of God is that He will be all and in all.

This evening we would like to look into one thing. Now that we know the eternal purpose of God which is His Son, what is our place in that eternal purpose? We said before that we have no place in God's eternal purpose. We have no place in His purpose that He has purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world. So far as God's purpose that He has purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world is concerned (Ephesians 1: 9-10), we find that it not only centered on His Son but that His Son is everything. His Son occupied the whole heart of God. God's heart is not divided. Our hearts are divided. But God's heart is pure and single. In His heart, there is only one person and everything is for that one person. Aside from that person, God has nothing and God will do nothing. God gives everything to His beloved Son. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. Outside of Him God has nothing because God has put Himself totally in His Son. That is the reason why we have no place in it. But when you come to Ephesians 3, there you find verses 9 – 11 said, *'and to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things, in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made*

*known through the assembly the all various wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*'. Pay attention to the phrase 'which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Ephesians 1:9 said 'which He purposed in Himself'. That is to say He purposed that in Himself and yet in 3: 11, you find that He purposed that purpose of the ages in Christ Jesus. And thus, in Christ Jesus, you find your place in God's eternal purpose. What I want to present before you is very simple. God's eternal purpose is His Son. Whatever is in His Son is related to God's eternal purpose. Anything that is not in His Son is outside of God's eternal purpose. The reason why there is a place in God's eternal purpose for us is not because of ourselves. It is because we are in Him. When we are in Him, then you will find that we are in God's eternal purpose. If you are not in Him, then you are outside of God's eternal purpose. That is the reason why we want to see our place in God's eternal purpose. In 1:11, it said in Him – in whom we also have obtained an inheritance. Brothers and sisters, the whole mystery of the gospel can be summed up in two phrases: in Christ and Christ in us. These two phrases summed up the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Oftentimes when we think of the gospel and the salvation of God, we think of something as outside of Christ Himself; something that He has done and then He has given these things to us. But it does not have this inward relationship with Himself. We often think of salvation as having our sins being forgiven and going to heaven. These are all true. The wages for sins are there but now Christ has completed the work of redemption. So I come to our Lord Jesus. I confessed my sins and I asked Him to forgive my sins. So He handed to me a package called forgiveness of sins. And when I got that package, my sins are forgiven. Or He may give us another package called eternal life. So I just take that package and I am sure when I die, I can go to heaven because it is an insurance policy. It will not be operative until I die. Our concept is He gave us

something. It has nothing really to do with Himself. But according to the word of God, the mystery of the gospel is not just the outside. When we believe in Christ, God put us in Christ. Within Christ we experience the forgiveness of sin and the assurance of eternal life. We must see that when we believe in the Lord Jesus, something inward happened. Our relationship with Christ is not an external one because we are in Him and He is in us. This was a mystery because before Jesus died; when He was with His disciples the last evening, He said, Phillip you still want to see the Father? If you know me, you know the Father because I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Of course, Phillip did not understand because it was something that He had never seen in this world. How could one person be in another person? That person could be alongside but not inside. It was a mystery. But our Lord Jesus told them on that day that was on the day of His resurrection they would know. I am in the Father, the Father is in me. I am in you and you are in me. This was how the mystery of the gospel revealed. So the gospel can be summed up: in Christ and Christ in us.

Now how are we in Christ? In 1 Corinthians 1:30, it said by God we are in Christ. It is God who put us there. So when we believe in the Lord Jesus, according to the Gospel of John we believe into Christ because 'believe in' means 'believe into'. When we believe in Christ, God puts us in Christ and when He puts you in Christ, you know what will happen. Everything that is in Christ is now made available to you because all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. And we are complete in Him. That is why in Ephesian 1:3 said 'Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus'. Here you find every spiritual blessing that you can think of or need, God has already blessed you with because all the blessings of God in the heavenlies are in Christ Jesus. Sometimes we tried to explain it with how the Israelites got into the Promised Land; how God promised this land flowing with milk and honey to the children of

Israel. God gave the land to us. It is the land flowing with milk and honey; a land of abundance. Brothers and sisters, you are in Christ. And in Christ every spiritual blessings belong to you. By faith you entered in.

Paul told us many things in Ephesians. For example, 1: 4 said *'according as He has chosen us in Him before the world's foundation'*. God has chosen you before the foundation of the world.

But how did He choose us? He has chosen us in Him. And that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love. God has not chosen us just that we can go to heaven. God has chosen us holy and blameless before Him in love. He marked us before hand for sonship in Christ. And that favor is given us in His beloved Son. Ephesians 1: 7 – 9, *'In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace; which He has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having mad know to us the mystery of His will'*. All these are in Him. And God has put us in Him. And not only in Him but He is also in us. So Colossians 1: 27 said, *'the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations which is Christ in you the hope of glory'*. Because Christ is in you, therefore He has become God's wisdom to you; and righteousness, holiness and redemption to you. That is to say, He will work everything out in your life. This is inheritance.

Brothers and sister, we have an inheritance and if you want to put this inheritance into one word, it is 'Christ'. God has given Christ to us to be our inheritance. And He has already given us the Holy Spirit as an earnest pledge. That is to say God has already put a down payment in you and the Holy Spirit is the down payment to show that God will lead you into the fullness of God. So here you find what the Lord has done for us. In Christ and Christ in us and that is how we are put into the eternal purpose of God. Remember Christ is our inheritance and everything that is in Christ is ours. What we need to do is to possess our possession. Just like the children of Israel,

they had to enter into Canaan and the place where they put down the sole of their feet would be theirs. And this is how we are related to God's eternal purpose. According to our translation, 1:11 of Ephesians told us 'in whom (in Him) we have also obtained an inheritance'. In other words, we have obtained an inheritance. In the eternal purpose of God, we obtained Christ. All that is His is ours. How glorious that is. But the best translation is different. The best translation is 'in whom we were designated as a heritage'. If you turn you Deuteronomy 32:9, it said *'for Jehovah's portion is His people; Jacob the lot of His inheritance'*. It is true that God had given Canaan to Israel as their inheritance. But this verse is different. It tells us that Jacob is the Lord's portion; that the children of Israel were God's inheritance. This gives us another side of the picture. To see that Christ is our inheritance is such a glorious revelation. We usually see Christ as our savior. What more is He to you? You find that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him and we are complete in Him. And He is everything to you. Whatever you need you do not need to find outside of Him. Stick with Him; go to Him. And by faith and obedience you get everything. If you see this, it really opens your eyes.

But we still always consider us as the center – He for me. I think the best translation fits it better. 'In Him we were designated as a heritage'. In other words, we become the inheritance of Christ. I think this is easier to understand because when you read that portion of the scripture, it does give you this thought. You find that in Ephesians 13 *'in whom you 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'*. What does the seal of the Holy Spirit mean? 'Seal' in the scripture refers to when a transaction is finished and you sealed it. And it means an ownership after you sealed it. It gives the security there. Take what happened in Jeremiah 32 as an example. At that time, Jeremiah was in prison in the tenth year of

Zedekiah. And of course, Jerusalem was surrounded by the Babylonians and God's words came to Jeremiah. Your nephew, Hanameel will come to you. And He will ask you to buy His portion of the land in Anathoth. And the nephew came. 'You as my uncle have the right of redemption. You should buy this land'. Remember it was during the time when the Babylonians had surrounded Jerusalem. So at that time to buy land was not a good transaction. And also at that time God had already told Jeremiah that the nation of Israel would be taken into captivity. And yet God told Jeremiah to buy that land. So you remember how Jeremiah weighed seventeen shekels of silver and bought the land. And He had everything written and sealed it. And during those days, they had one book sealed and one book opened. After this transaction was done, Jeremiah put it in an earthen vessel, hid it because the day would come when that sealed transaction of land would be revealed. So that was the meaning of 'sealed'. What is meant by we are being sealed by the Holy Spirit. Some people said that the background of sealing is this. In the old days when people came to the forest to buy woods, they looked at the tree they wanted and then they would put their seal on it. After that the tree would be cut and the tree transported to the sea. Those who bought these woods would come and when they saw their seal on the wood they would know which tree was theirs. So what is the seal of the Holy Spirit? We have a seal by the Holy Spirit. Whose seal is that? Who bought us? Who declares that you are mine? Of course, it is our Lord. He has bought us with a price and said you are mine. He has put His seal on you. And that is secured and we belong to Him. So we are His inheritance. But brothers and sisters, when you come to Ephesians 14, it said '*who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory*'. Earnest means down payment – a down payment to say that I am going to pay everything. Here we read the earnest of our inheritance. In other words, Christ is our inheritance and the down payment is the Holy Spirit

because He will glorify Christ in us. He will transform us so we will be like Christ. How are we going to explain this verse: 'redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory.'

Darby suggested this. He said the antecedent is 'the redemption of the acquired possession'. The antecedent is the seal with the Holy Spirit of promise. And then you put who is the earnest of our inheritance in parenthesis. So this is the way you read it: you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (who is the earnest of our inheritance). And then you connect the Spirit of promise up with the 'redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory'. In other words, the acquired possession is you. He has begun a work in you. And He is to finish that work in you. And when the work is finished then that is to the praise of God's glory.

Now you turn to verse 18 *'being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that you should know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.'*

Here you find the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Now brothers and sisters, think for a moment, Christ is our inheritance, the riches of the glory of our inheritance. Brothers and sisters, can you imagine how it is possible to say the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints? Our God is a bad businessman. In the transaction, we got Christ as our inheritance – the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ. But He got us. We are a desert and a ruin. What an exchange! How can it be glory? How can it be riches of glory? It is impossible. But what is impossible will be made possible because of the exceeding greatness of His power. It is His power that works in Christ in raising Him from the dead. And even put Him on the throne. That power will work in those who believe. So one day we will be transformed and conformed to the image of the Son. Brothers and sisters, when that happens you will see the riches of the glory of His inheritance because the Son will lead many sons into glory. And that He may be the firstborn of His brothers. So when you see this, you see your place in God's eternal purpose.

In Colossians yesterday we read only to verse 20. We want to continue today. God created all things for His Son that His Son may be glorified. But unfortunately, there was rebellion in creation. We already said God's eternal purpose was challenged. In the former world, we found some of the angels rebelled against God. Who is equal with God? The Son is equal with the Father. Yet Lucifer wanted to be equal with God. He wanted to take the place of the Son of God. And there was rebellion and because of the rebellion, you find the solar system became under his rule. When he was cast out of heaven, you find our system entered into ruin and desolation. But God's purpose cannot be defeated or changed. God began to work. The Spirit of God roamed over the ruinous earth. The Holy Spirit began to work upon the ruinous earth and in six days He restored the earth to be habitable. Why? It was because God would create man. And He will use man to defeat the enemy. Not only that because that is negative. There is also a positive side. He wants to give man to His Son as a life companion. So man has a very important place in God's plan. And that is the reason why God created man in His likeness and according to His image. But unfortunately, man rebelled against God. And because of the sin of man, the whole world entered into emptiness and fell into corruption. The whole world creation is groaning because of the sin of man. But God's eternal purpose cannot be defeated. It is still with man. It is the second man. We see Jesus tasted death for us. He completed the work of redemption to reconcile all things back to God – to the fullness of God; to the eternal purpose of God. You find that the bible mentioned 'by the blood of the cross with all creation'. He reconciled all things to Himself. The whole universe was in chaos because it had lost its meaning. It had lost its focus. It disintegrated when man rejected the Son. But now through the Son the whole universe came back to order and reconciled to God's eternal purpose and you. Here you find something else is added and He said '*and you, who once were alienated and*

*enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of His flesh through death*'. With all creation, the blood of Jesus is already enough. His blood purifies all creation. But with man we need not only the blood of His cross but we need also His body through death. Why? It is because we have a will of our own. We have that self-will. We have that fallen flesh. And because of this, we not only need cleansing through the blood, we also need to have the work of the cross in our life. Hebrews 10: 19 said *'Having, therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus*'. And a way was designated for us through His own flesh. Here you find we need the blood of our Lord Jesus to cleanse us from all our sins. And we need to walk the way of the cross. He has designated and opened that way for us. His body was rent and this is the new and holy way. In other words, His cross has to work in our lives, to put our flesh to death, to put our self to death, so that in resurrection we may be conformed to His image. So we may be holy, unblemished, and irreproachable before Him. This is the will of God because when we are going through the working of the cross in our life, we will be identified with Christ in death and resurrection. We will be delivered from our flesh itself and Christ will form in us. When Christ is formed in us, the riches of the glory of His inheritance are in the saints in Christ. And when we allow the Holy Spirit to use the cross to work in our lives to take away from us everything that is not of Christ and to fill us with Christ, Christ becomes all and in all to us. The eternal purpose of God will be done. Man had led all creation into ruin. But when we are willing to submit ourselves to Him, through man all creation will be brought back to Him. In Romans 8, it said the whole creation is groaning and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. And when the sons of God are manifested they will be emancipated. The sons of God are grown up children of God. They grow up through the discipline of the Holy Spirit. They grow up by walking the way of the cross. And in doing this,

they become overcomers. They overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony and they love not their own life even unto death. That is negative. The positive is they become the bride of the Lamb. God has made them ready, clothed with the shiny white garment, the righteousness of the saints. And this is how the eternal purpose of Christ is being fulfilled in the church. So in Ephesians 5, it said Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her, washing her by the water of the word that they may be sanctified and be without wrinkles and others of the sort, be holy and without blemish. The glorious church is the bride of the Lamb. Now God's eternal purpose of Christ is fulfilled.

Dear heavenly Father, on the one hand we are most grateful, we praise and thank You for Your purpose which is all in Thy Son. On the other hand, we feel humbled, with all the grace Thou have shown us, instead of cooperating, we are evading. Lord, have mercy upon us. We want to offer ourselves to Your Son that He may be all in all to us that Thou may be glorified. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.