

# CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL

## THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

WCCC2012 Brother Steven Kaung 1of 3

*Colossians 3:11—Wherein there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is everything, and in all.*

*Ephesians—1:9-10—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 fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.*

Let us pray:

*Dear Lord, as we gather here we do realize that we are standing on holy ground. We praise and thank Thee for Thy precious promise, that where two or three are gathered unto My name, there will I be in their midst. Dear Lord, we are gathered here in Thy name and we believe that Thou art here with us. Lord, we will remove our shoes and stand on the ground of Thy bondslaves and say, "Lord, what dost Thou have to say to us? Speak, Thy servants heareth." May Thy will be done on earth in our midst as in heaven. May Thou be glorified. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.*

We do thank the Lord for gathering us together. Every time God gives us such an opportunity I feel that it is the longsuffering and the mercy of God. I believe we all feel that our Lord is coming soon. As a matter of fact, He can come at any moment. How good it would be if He should come now! But because we are not prepared to see Him, therefore He still gives us further opportunity to be ready. He wants every one of us to be well-prepared for Him. He wants us to see Him face to face without shame. So we are most grateful to the Lord, and our prayer is that we will not miss the opportunity. Hopefully, each and every one of us will be ready and open to the Lord so that what He has purposed even before the foundation of the world for each one may be fully realized. It is not for us alone but it is more for Him.

I believe we all know the theme which is taken from Colossians 3:11: "Christ is all and in all." Now we know that this verse refers to the church; that is to say, Christ is everything and in all to His church. But we know from the Word of God that it is more than just to the church. Of course, it is important that the church should experience Christ as all and in all; but this is for the whole universe. So we would like to begin with the eternal purpose of God.

### DELIVERED FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Maybe we have all heard of this term: the eternal purpose of God. So what does it have to do with us? When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we are not thinking of the eternal purpose of God; we are thinking of ourselves. As a matter of fact, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, it is for selfish reasons. But thank God, He is so gracious

and merciful even if we are self-centered. We want to be saved in order that we may go to heaven, so that our sins may be forgiven, and we will not go to hell. It is all selfish, but God condescends Himself to our level. He is willing to save even selfish people such we are.

However, even after we are saved and living a Christian life, we are still self-centered. We consider ourselves as the center of the universe; everything is for us. God is for us; Christ is for us; we are the center. We are self-centered people. Therefore, for this reason we are not concerned with the eternal purpose of God. We need to be delivered from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness or God-consciousness.

“In the beginning God ...” God is the beginning of everything, and the Scripture tells us in Ephesians 1: “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” (vv. 9-10a).

### **THE MYSTERY OF GOD’S WILL**

There is such a thing called: “the mystery of His will.” God’s will is the greatest in the universe, and when He made up His will, it was according to His good pleasure. There is something that pleases God so much that it is the center of His heart and according to His good pleasure. Even before the foundation of the world, when there was nothing but God Himself, God made a will, and it pleased Him so much. And everything that God has done afterwards is according to that will. It governs all of God’s actions—in His creation, in His redemption, and in His recovery work. Everything is according to His will. So we can see how important it is. If there is anything that is not within His will it does not count before God. Whatever He does is according to His will for the accomplishment of His will. And it is God’s will that governs the universe, all of His actions, and every one of us. We can see from this just how important the eternal will of God is.

### **ALL THINGS WILL BE SUMMED UP IN CHRIST**

Now to put it very simply, this eternal will of God is this: He wants to head up all things in Christ. In the heart of God there is only one Person, and that Person is His beloved Son, and out of His love for His beloved Son He will do all things. This is the reason for His creation, and this is the reason for His redemption; He wants His Son to be all and in all. In Darby’s version it reads: “To head up all things in Christ.” Everything will be headed up in Christ. In another version it says, “God will gather up all things in Christ.” Or “He will sum up all things in Christ.”

### **LOVE SUMS UP ALL THE COMMANDMENTS**

Now what does it mean to “sum up all things in Christ”? I will use an illustration out of Romans 13. Here the apostle Paul is talking about the commandments of God: “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not be greedy. Thou shalt not think of other people’s things.” But as we read the Old Testament we find not only the Ten Commandments but many statutes and ordinances. Nevertheless, whatever they are, they are all summed up in one word—*love*. Thou shalt love thy

neighbor as thyself.” Behind all these commandments the principle that governs them is love; therefore, love sums up all these commandments. If you love you will not kill, if you love you will not commit adultery, if you love you will not be greedy. So love is the summing up of all the commandments.

### **GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE GOVERNS EVERYTHING**

In the same manner Christ sums up all things, not only the things in the heavens but all things on earth, and even the things beneath the earth. There is no exception. Christ is the governing principle of all things, even God’s work. If it is Christ it is worthwhile before God. If it is not Christ it will be of no concern to God. So this is the reason we find that the eternal purpose of God governs everything. If we are related to the eternal purpose of God, then it will be accepted by God. If we are not related in our actions or thoughts in our daily life with the eternal purpose of God, then in the sight of God it is evil and it will be rejected. In the Sermon on the Mount we find that the Lord Jesus used an illustration. One day people will come to the Lord and say, “We have preached in Your name; we have performed miracles in Your name; we have cast out demons in Your name.” But the Lord Jesus will say, “I do not know you; that is to say, I do not approve of you. You are evil in the sight of God” (see Matthew 7:21-23). So this is how important the eternal purpose of God is.

### **A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD**

I remember by the grace of God when He saved me in 1930, His love filled my heart, and I did have a desire to serve Him. I was in high school at the time and some of the students came together and organized all kinds of religious meetings. We organized bands going to villages to preach, and whenever the church had any activity we were in the front line, trying to draw people into the building to hear the gospel. We were on fire for the Lord. But even though we were serving God according to our will we thought it was what God wanted, and we did it for Him. Nevertheless, we were still self-centered.

In 1935 I joined work with brother Watchman Nee, and for several years I traveled around China. We preached the gospel, people got saved, and we gathered them together. There were four things that we emphasized. Number one was baptism. When people got saved, they needed to be baptized by immersion. Number two was the breaking of bread. We need to remember the Lord. Number three was that the sisters had to have head coverings. And number four was that we needed to leave the denomination and be one. These were the four important things we did. And of course, after God’s people were gathered together we would study the Bible with them.

After I had done that for a number of years I felt spiritually weary and thought if this was all then there was nothing. But thank God that He moves in a mysterious way, His wonder to perform. I was in Singapore when the Second World War started and I was stranded there. At the very last minute God opened a way for me to escape, and it was just marvelous. There was a coastal liner wanting to flee to Rangoon, and since that was my plan to go from Singapore to Rangoon and then take the Burma Road that had just been opened to Interior China I wanted to travel

on it. But then the war broke out and I was stranded, but in a marvelous way at the last minute God got me out.

It was December 30, 1941, and Singapore was beginning to be surrounded. But at 4:00 o'clock a small boat was leaving Singapore with over a hundred Chinese on it. The pier was burning and we had no protection of any kind. But thank God that there were a few brothers and sisters in that boat. So we prayed every day and God took us out. That evening the British and the Americans evacuated their women and children and they had a convoy with warships. But one of the ships was sunk and we were just a single boat standing by itself going to Rangoon. But on the third day the captain announced that we could not go there because Rangoon had fallen into Japanese hands. Now where would we go? Before we boarded the boat we had signed a paper that they could let us off anywhere in the world and we would be responsible. Finally, the captain announced we were going to Madras, India.

Oh, what marvelous work God does! After ten days we arrived in Madras but were not allowed to land. After two days of negotiations we were able to land, and there I met a sister in the Lord whom I had heard of before. Her name was Lady Ogle, and she belonged to nobility. Her father was a millionaire and her husband was a titled soldier. They both died and she was left alone in Italy in a marble palace where she lived. But every year she would go back to England to attend a famous Keswick Convention. Nevertheless, she felt life was meaningless. She had all the money but what was life? Even though she was a Christian, yet she felt life was meaningless.

One year she went back to England, and before the Keswick Convention there was a Swanwick Convention founded by Mrs. Penn-Lewis. Lady Ogle went there and heard a young man speaking of the eternal purpose of God, and suddenly her eyes were opened. She realized that life did have meaning whereas formerly she thought life was meaningless. She had everything, but what was that? Now her horizon was widened. She knew God's purpose, and she would live for God's purpose.

At that time she went to India. She bought a few houses in the best resort places and set them up with English gardens, servants and maids. Her ministry was that every summer she would invite God's servants to come and rest, and she would serve them. And by the providence of God I went to her place and spent two and a half months. During the quiet time God began to speak to me and reveal the eternal purpose of God. He began to show me that Christ is everything. I had already been preaching for years but I was at my end. Suddenly the horizon was opened and I had a ministry. God changed me completely. There is no limit to Christ.

So let us see that the eternal purpose of God is not just a theological term. The eternal purpose of God is most practical and affects our whole life. So do not consider the eternal purpose of God as something remote, something good to talk about but not practical or real or living. We will discover that it touches the very fiber of our living. We need to know God's eternal purpose. Then we will be delivered from our self-centeredness into Christ-centeredness.

### **OUTSIDE OF GOD'S WILL**

Brothers and sisters, are we still self-centered? Are we thinking of ourselves as the center of the universe? Does everything start with us and end with us? Christ is for me, God is for me, everybody is for me. If this is what you think, then you are outside the eternal purpose of God and you are outside of God; therefore, your life will be a waste. No matter how good it is, if it is not God's will, if it is not related to God's eternal purpose, it has no eternal value. So if we would live with eternal value we need to see that Christ is everything and in all. This must be an experience. It should not be just a theory to think and talk about. This should be practiced in every day life. It affects us today, tomorrow and forever. So let us see how important the eternal purpose of God is.

Do you think that you are in the center of God's heart? No, it is Christ who is the center of God's heart. Who do you see at the heart of God? No one!—but His beloved Son. Everything is for His Son; everything is to be summed up in Christ Jesus, and that is the work of God through all these centuries.

### **ALL CREATION IS CREATED IN HIM, BY HIM, FOR HIM**

We find in Colossians 1:16 that God created the universe, and everything was created *in* Him, that is in Christ Jesus. What does this mean? He is like an architect. He designed everything out of His nature and character, and then He created everything. So everything is created in Him, and everything is created *by* Him. He is not only an architect, He is also the engineer. And everything is created *for* Him; He is the owner of everything. And He is *before* all creation, and the whole creation is gathered together in Him. This is what creation is.

We know that in the beginning all creation praised and glorified Him. All creation expressed Him and manifested His character. Not only that, He tells us that He is all in all to His church, the body of Christ. He is not only the beginning but He is everything to the church. And when the universe disintegrated because of sin He is the one who restored everything and reconciled all things to the fullness of God. This is the eternal purpose of God, and this is the mystery of God's will.

In the Bible we are told of another mystery. It is called the mystery of lawlessness (see II Thessalonians 2:7). Why is it called a mystery? A mystery is something hidden and it needs to be revealed. Our God is the God who reveals Himself, and in Galatians 1 we find Paul saying, "It pleases God to reveal His Son in me." So our God is the revealer. How we need to depend upon Him! We cannot depend upon our wisdom and our knowledge for anything, especially spiritual things, no matter how knowledgeable or how wise we are. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 11: "Father, You have hidden these things from the prudent and the wise, and You have revealed them to babes" (see v. 25). Before God we need to be like babes—not childish but child-like. That is to say, we acknowledge that we know nothing and we depend upon His revelation. So may the Lord give to all of us the spirit of wisdom and revelation to the full knowledge of God.

It is not enough just to know spiritual things in our mind. As a matter of fact, if we only know spiritual things in our mind it condemns us. It does not save us; we need to receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation from God. And thank God He is One who reveals Himself. He is One who loves to reveal His Son in us.

## **THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS**

When you go to visit a family that has a new baby, the first thing the parents do is show forth their baby. Now our God is like that. He has a Son and it is His good pleasure to show forth His Son. But unfortunately, we find there is another mystery, and it is the mystery of lawlessness which was here even before man. In the original creation the highest created beings were angels, and they were called morning stars. There was one morning star who was created with such perfection, wisdom, talent and position because he was the anointed cherubim. He was very close to God, and he was probably the one who led the angels in worshiping God. However, because of his beauty and talents he began to have pride within himself. He did something he was not supposed to do; he began to think of himself. He was supposed to think of God and lead the other angels to worship God, but he became self-centered.

### **THE FALL OF LUCIFER, THE BRILLIANT STAR**

We find in Isaiah 14 that God was speaking about the king of Babylon, but suddenly there came a few words that cannot be applied to any person, not even the king of Babylon. And the Bible says, "Lucifer, the brilliant star," but somehow he became self-centered. Five times he spoke of himself: "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like God" (see vv. 12-14 NASV). And because of his self-centeredness he was driven out from the throne of God. That was the beginning of lawlessness and the beginning of Satan. He turned himself into the adversary of God because of his self-centeredness.

In Ezekiel 28 you find another instance where God is talking about Tyre. Suddenly the description is given that does not fit with any king, and it is that same Lucifer. And because of his wisdom and beauty he became self-centered and an adversary of God. This is the spirit of lawlessness.

### **ONE CREATED LOWER THAN THE ANGELS TO DEFEAT GOD'S ENEMY**

How will God react to that? As a matter of fact, for God to annihilate this archangel would be an easy thing. He could speak a word and it would be done. His breath could kill that archangel, but that will not give God glory. It would be just like a grown-up trying to beat a baby. There is no glory in that. So what is God's strategy? It is to create one lower than the angel to defeat His enemy, and that is the reason why man was created. Thus we are not created without a purpose.

### **MAN'S MISSION**

Why did God create man in such a unique way? He had never created anything like man whom He created in His own image according to His own likeness. Why is it so? Why is man so special? It is because God has a purpose for man. He wants to use man, who is a little lower than the angels, to defeat His enemy. So we have a mission. God created us with a mission and it is to defeat His enemy. How can we do that? In ourselves we are lower than the angels. How can we defeat one higher than us, wiser than us, and mightier than us? There is a way; it is by receiving God's life in

us because in our own life we are always defeated. But with the life of Christ in us, with the life of God in us, we are able to defeat the enemy. Adam, the first man, failed, and all in Adam failed, but God sent the second Man, who is Christ, His own Son. He emptied Himself and came into this world to take up the form of a man with a slave heart; that is to say, His whole life was to deny Himself and submit to God. The enemy tried to draw Him out but He never yielded to temptation. He was obedient to His Father unto death, even the death of the cross. The Lord Jesus said: "It is finished!" The work is done and the enemy is defeated. Then He gave His own life to us, and by that life we are to defeat the enemy.

Brothers and sisters, this is our mission. So we can see how important it is that we are not only saved but how we need to live by the life of Christ in us. Unfortunately, we are still self-centered. We rely upon ourselves, even though it might be with good intention. But we are doomed to fail. So it is wise if we really surrender ourselves to the Lord and allow His life to take charge of us. Then all the works of the enemy will be defeated in our life and we will grow in spiritual life and really be a sanctified church to God.

#### **GOD'S STANDARD OF JUDGMENT**

So here I am just laying a foundation to say that it is God's will that we be in the eternal purpose of God. Only that life is worthwhile. One day when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, this will be the standard of judgment. Is it Christ or is it you? Do not consider this as a theological idea. There is nothing more practical than the eternal purpose of God. May our life be connected with the eternal purpose of God every day. Then when we see Him, we shall see His smiling face. So may the Lord have mercy upon us.

Let us pray:

*Dear Lord, we do pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. We realize that without Thy revelation we can never understand Thy purpose. Our horizon will just be limited to ourselves. Oh dear Lord, for Thine own sake we do pray that Thou wilt enlarge our horizon, deliver us out of ourselves and fill us with Christ so that we may truly testify that Christ is all and in all to the glory of God and to accomplish God's purpose. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.*