

# WITH A PURPOSE IN MIND

By

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This is the generation of knowledge and power. Man has been able to explore space, as well as the tiny invisible human cell. He has created “smart bombs” that destroy targets with pinpoint accuracy, and he has developed technology to instantaneously transmit voices and images worldwide. At the touch of a key, vast realms of knowledge that would fill thousands of volumes is available on the internet to millions of people in their homes. Our nation is now said to be the world’s one and only Super Power.

## **The question is: To what purpose?**

We hold the world’s record for incarcerations. Ours is the only nation where children murder their classmates. The electronic “information highway” has failed to lead down the road to moral standards and a safe environment.

We have attained great power and knowledge, but with no great purpose in mind. The rule of those who hold the reins of this power is marked with injustice, deceit, and greed. It is said that “power corrupts,” and never has this been more obvious than in our present time. Wielding power without the right purpose can only yield destruction.

**If there is a correct purpose to be pursued by man**, it must be that purpose revealed by man’s Creator, and if we seek any other purpose than that, it is not only the wrong purpose, but it is doomed to failure, for only that which fits the eternal plan of God will ultimately be accomplished. His purpose was stated in the beginning, when He said, “Let us make man in our image after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Adam and Eve rejected that purpose when they sought to become “as God,” and pursued a purpose of their own (Gen. 3:5). We know the sad results.

To enable man to fulfill His purpose God has given rules and instructions, that we might have a mind-to-mind relationship with Him, but the history of man is a record of his attempt to find a way to live by his own rules. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psalm 2:2-3). Our legislators and courts make it illegal for God’s commandments to be taught in school and, instead, seek to annul those commandments by legalizing abortion, prohibiting parental discipline, and making sodomy acceptable. One can spend 12 years in a public school and 4 to 6 more years in a University, and learn absolutely nothing of the Creator’s purpose. In fact, great effort is made to keep the student from thinking of the Creator at all, or even believing that He exists. Then the “educators” hold conferences and ask how the massacre at the Littleton school could have happened.

The violence taking place all over the world is the result of man exercising his God-given power for the wrong purposes, rather than seeking the purpose of God.

**God's purpose is demonstrated in His Son, Jesus Christ**, "Who is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). God not only gave His son as a sacrificial offering to atone for our sins that we might be free of sin and death, but also that we might know the purpose of the Father through the Son. We see in Jesus one who perfectly fulfilled the Father's purpose. Not only did God publicly announce that He was well pleased with His son, but Jesus so perfectly fulfilled every facet of God's purpose that he was exalted to the right hand of God and given dominion over the creation (Luke 3:22; Eph. 1:20-22)

**When we make the commitment to follow Jesus**, we are also committing to fulfill God's purpose to have us in His image. Paul wrote that those who are called according to His purpose are foreordained to be conformed to the image of His son (Rom.8:28-29). Making us into that image requires a lot of changes – serious changes. He isn't playing – none of this foxhole religion, false promises, hollow worship, or lip service. We are to be transformed from the inside out. The theme that is popular with the church crowds today is prosperity, fame, pleasure, and security, and little concern for the ultimate purpose. One wants to settle the whole thing about eternity in one moment, so he can get it over with and get on with his life.

**But it is a lifetime process.** Jesus said, "Let him take up his cross daily and follow me." In the words of Paul, we are buried with Christ through baptism into death: "that we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). That's just the beginning of new life, and it is a continuous walk in the direction of God's purpose.

John wrote that everyone who has the hope of becoming like Jesus "purifies himself even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). This is not to say that we can perfect ourselves to His image by our own will and efforts. The broad way, which Jesus said leads to destruction, is littered with the broken lives of those who thought they could rise to the heights of perfection by their own determination and ability. What God wants from us is humility, trust, and obedience. The transformation is by His hand when we submit to Him.

**Our confidence is in God, not in ourselves.** Can God fulfill His purpose? Indeed, He can. "God is able to make all grace abound unto you..." (2 Cor 9:8). That grace may come in the form of suffering, loss, or persecution. When we allow external circumstances to fill us with anxiety and make us worry, what does this say about God's grace but that it has failed and God cannot provide? The apostle Paul prayed to the Lord three times to remove the "thorn in the flesh" which he suffered, but the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor.12:8-9) Paul then wrote, "Wherefore I take pleasure in weakness, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong" (v.10).

Once we tell Him that we want His will to be done we can expect some real work to begin to reshape us cutting off a growth of pride here, shaving away an ugly spot (in the heart) there, cutting out a tumor of lust or cancer of greed. We are talking about change in

which the old man is put to death and buried, so that the new man may emerge in the image of God (Eph. 4:22-24). We must cease thinking as the world thinks, in terms of a life of ease without problems or pain. Jesus promised the opposite: tribulation, persecution, a cross to bear, hatred of the world, chastening, etc.

Sometimes the things that we see as tragedies and hardships are rather the strong steps that God takes in order to humble us, for we will never yield to the strong hands of the Potter until the lumps of pride and self-righteous resistance are removed. He has the power to use all the tough trials as tools to fashion us into His image. He could remove the pain, but it might also remove an important step in our growth. Hard circumstances are our opportunities to depend on God's grace, and also to manifest to the world that we belong to Him. A recent letter from a dear brother asked for prayer because he was battling cancer and was weak in faith. In my reply I said that I, too, had battled cancer, but believed that I would live as long as God wants me to, and therefore I have no reason to be anxious about it. I wrote, "The Lord will give you life as long as He can use you for His purpose. Of course, we would like to feel good and healthy while He is using us, but if not, there is still spiritual health and growth that may be advanced in spite of the physical problems." Such problems remind us of our mortality, that this life is temporary and will soon pass, but God has something far better in His plan for us.

**The fulfillment of that plan will be glorious** beyond anything corruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away." (1 Pet. 1:4) Peter was writing to Christians, who were suffering terrible persecution, but he told them not to think of their fiery trials as something strange, "but inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also you may rejoice with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13).

When Jesus prayed, 'Not my will be done, but thine,' he knew the Father's purpose, and that it would bring him suffering and death. He also knew that death was not the end, but that he would be raised up and crowned with glory and honor.

Paul wrote, "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"(Rom. 8: 18), and that "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor.4:17).

God's purpose to have us in His image has not changed, and it is to the glory of that goal that we are being led in triumph by Christ our King.

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