

THE PURPOSE THAT WILL PREVAIL

By

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“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female.” (Gen.1:26,27). Afterwards God declared “It is very good.”

The human body is the most complex and mysterious machine known to man, with billions of parts and trillions of cells which perform some 10,000 chemical functions to keep the body working. Being in the image of God obviously does not refer to our physical being, since God is spirit. Being in God's image has to do with man's character and mentality, for God's purpose is to have creatures who think along the pure and beautiful lines that God thinks — a mind-to-mind relationship — that there might be fellowship between God and man.

This magnificent purpose has almost been eliminated from our society by the barbarians of art, journalism, education, and political correctness. Even in the churches one will seldom hear any reference to this marvelous purpose of the Creator, for modern churches are marketed to the public like merchandise, continually refashioning their images to win the approval of the very barbarians who despise God. The high goal of a mind-to-mind relationship with God has been traded for mere religion.

Yet, God's purpose will ultimately be accomplished. His purpose is the only purpose that will finally prevail. He will have man in His own image - man whose chief aim is to be with God, to fellowship with God and to walk with God in harmony with Him.

How this is to be accomplished is seen in the life of Jesus, who scripture says is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). He taught his disciples to follow his example, “leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet.2:21).

The extent to which we should follow is seen in the prayer Jesus prayed on the night he was betrayed. As he prayed for the apostles, he then added, “Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John.17:20-21).

Here Jesus prayed that his disciples might become one with him just as he is one with the Father. I think it obvious that Jesus was not using “one” in the sense of *one being or one substance*. He used the expression of “being one” in other places, and from them we can see that “one purpose” is meant. (John. 10:30; 11:52. Cf. 1Cor. 3:8)

Jesus repeatedly stated that his purpose coincided with the Father's. “I do always the things that are pleasing to my father.” “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me”

John 4:34). As he faced the greatest task, that of sacrificing himself as a sin-offering on the cross, he prayed, "Not my will, but thine be done."

He calls us to the same commitment. "If any man would come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). This can only mean that to follow him, we must deny any purpose or desire that conflicts with the purpose of God to have us in His own image. Our purpose must be to do the Father's will, and thus be conformed to His image, as He intends. "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29)

Oneness with Christ means unity in thought. Jesus said, "The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father has said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:50). "The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:10). We, too, are expected to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). We are exhorted to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).

This was one of the main purposes in the assembly of the early church that the Christian might be subject to apostolic teaching and edification by other disciples. Contemporary churches, in contrast, seek to entertain the saints and make the lost feel comfortable. In many churches one might as well park the mind with the car, for there is little exercise for it in the service inside.

Christ demands a transformed life, but what the church asks of the sinner is a little prayer, and participation in the golf tournament or the softball team. As Bill Bathman wrote, "Small wonder then that the church's voice is so weak and its witness so ineffective as to be unable to withstand the advance of humanism, or to thwart society's downward slide toward Sodom. Whatever happened to the salt and light? Having lost our salt we need not be surprised when we're cast out and trampled under godless, Christ-rejecting, humanistic feet." (*In Touch Monthly*, 2/1/2000)

This is why we keep building bigger church organizations, each one with many "ministers" of this and that, and still there is less and less peace and joy and light of truth manifested to society. The power to transform society is not in the professional clergy nor in the skillfully marketed church organizations, but in the simplicity of the gospel as it is voiced and then demonstrated in the individual lives of the disciples as they go about their daily activities at home, at school, at work and in society in general, each one individually growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet.3:18).

We are not in the world as mere observers waiting for the "rapture" as many are misled to do. Rather, we are here to hold forth the light of God's truth through example and proclamation.

We cannot escape the reality that we live in a world flawed by sin, so much so that Paul called it “this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4). Jesus lived in just such a world. It resisted him, rejected him, and killed him, and he called every disciple to follow him. He left us an example of how we are to view the world as a field where we are to plant the seed of God's word and seek to reap a harvest of redeemed people.

Jesus said to his disciples, “I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matt. 10:16). They rejected the Hedonistic lifestyle of the Romans and Greeks, and were seen as fanatics despised by both Jews and pagans. They were hated by the religious leaders, persecuted, chased from city to city, beaten and thrown into prison. Yet, they kept the light of truth burning, and turned the world upside down.” For such sacrifice and faithfulness they received no earthly remuneration nor reward, but were despised as undesirables and either exiled or killed.

How were they able to withstand such opposition and still accomplish so much? Paul revealed the secret when he wrote “For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). It is the act of simple obedience to God that allows Him to transform one into His image. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

To walk in these good works begins with a drastic change, which the Bible calls repentance. Jesus began his ministry with these words, “Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). Repentance is more than being sorry for sin. It means a change of action as well as a change of heart. It means to stop living for the temporal things, and begin living for the eternal. It means to stop trying to have your own way, and start trying to do it God's way. The “I did it my way” philosophy will never result in a transformation to God's image.

All other plans will fail. Religions created by great men will prove to be false. Attempts to unite all faiths into one great religion will continue to fail. The politically correct policies, under the name of love, or equality, or tolerance, or whatever, will prove inadequate; only those who come to God through His Son Jesus will reach Him and receive eternal life. All efforts to bring about peace that leave out peace with God will fail. The great move toward a One World Government will ultimately fail.

Only that which meets the purpose of God will He perfect and preserve for eternity. This will include all those who have responded to the call of Christ, “Hereby he has granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust” (2 Pet. 1:4).

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