

The Purpose of God

Part 1

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[00:00:00] which we look at one by one, but first of all I'll list the scriptures so that you know where we are heading. Psalm 33 verse 11, Proverbs 15 verse 22 and again Proverbs 20 verse 18, Isaiah 14 verses 24 to 27 and chapter 46 verses 9 to 11, Romans 8 verse 28, Romans 9 verse 11, Ephesians 1 verse 11, Ephesians 3 verse 11, 2 Timothy 1 verse 9 and lastly 1 John 3 verse 8.

In being concerned as to the line of ministry to take up during the week, I was helped on [00:01:02] coming home from Scotland the other day to find a request from Donald in a letter that perhaps to fit in with local exercises then, discussions held in their weekly Bible study, that it might be helpful to look at the subject of the counsel of God. Well of course it's always good where there is a local exercise to follow through. So in dwelling upon that, I thought it could well be that it would be helpful to us all and it might just give us the incentive to get to as many of the meetings in the area as we are available for if the themes were connected. There are scriptures which present within the compass of a few [00:02:03] verses many or several important concepts that are peculiar to scripture where there is no other real guide for what we need to learn than what scripture says and in each of these cases the only right thing to do is to see where and in what kind of scripture these words occur to look at them first of all in their own immediate context and then in the context of scripture as a whole. There are sections of scripture where these terms are put in a concentrated way and in one of the scriptures we look at Romans 8 28 we do get five or six within a few verses and we'll be looking at some of them. Now tonight I suggest [00:03:07] that we start in the only possible way to start and that is in thinking of the purpose of God. To look at these scriptures which I've listed and to see what's in mind. Now let none of us old or young be put off by apparently complicated words. When we see the use of them in scripture the lesson is quite simple to learn. The other thing is we shouldn't be surprised that because these concepts are so complex and interlinked we'll not be surprised to find that they overlap and that in looking at any one of them some of the other terms come into the context. Indeed [00:04:02] when we sing these hymns and I've selected for our opening hymn a verse which refers to the purpose of God in one way or another and when we look at these hymns that refer to one of these concepts others are referred to in passing. So let us not be disturbed to find that they overlap. Let us seek to distinguish things that differ. The purpose of God. First of all we need to note that in scripture the purpose of God is always in the singular. We'll find this of other words too. We don't read of God's purposes as being many or diverse. We read of [00:05:08] the purpose of God in the singular. We'll not fault each other for a word and if we find each other using terms or occasionally talking about purposes, the purposes of God, let's not find fault with each other. But if we want to be exact let us remember that scripture speaks of the purpose of God. Now I've read Psalm 33 because it's one of the earlier verses that refers to these things and the way that I want to look at them is not necessarily in any doctrinal, dispensational or chronological sequence. I'm merely looking at them for

convenience in the order of the scriptures which refer to them. So let us look at Psalm 33. Verse 11. The counsel [00:06:07] of the Lord. Well there you are. If the Lord will, on Wednesday is it, we'll be looking at the counsel of God. Again singular. The counsel of God as a separate concept. But here notice what it says.

The counsel of the Lord standeth forever. The thoughts of his heart to all generations. Now I've read this verse because it shows that the counsel of the Lord and the thoughts of his heart are very close together. I don't believe that this is multiplying words and saying the same thing twice. And I would suggest to you for your meditation, and we'll build up on this as we go [00:07:05] through the scripture, that this term the thoughts of his heart could well be an early reference to what scripture plainly refers to in other scriptures as the purpose of God. God has something in mind, has had that in his mind from the outset and will never deviate from it. That's a simple statement. God is not dissuaded or deflected from what he has in mind. As we look at scriptures, we might find references that might to a superficial reader lead one to conclude, well, because things got difficult or because certain problems arose, that God had to amend [00:08:05] or change or alter to accommodate the circumstances of the day. Not a bit of it. We learn from the outset that God has something in mind and the circumstances of life, the opposition of man and Satan only serve to highlight that God will not be thwarted. Let's pause there. We often have difficulties, don't we? We often have problems. We might be tempted to think that everything's going to ruin and God's plans for us are not going to work out after all. Or we have the assurance that from the very beginning, what God has in mind for himself, for Christ, for the blessing of man, [00:09:05] his plan remains unaltered. Now, I want to pick out from here the thoughts of his heart. God has from the outset certain things in his heart, in his mind. We must use these terms, scripture does, to give us the idea that God has set himself and he has certain things in mind. We've just sung about it, that lovely phrase, wisdom's wondrous plan. Well, that's all I want to pick out from Psalm 33. God has something in his heart and mind. The thoughts of his heart. The counsel of the Lord, when we come to that, stands forever. The thoughts of his heart to all generations. There will be no deviation in the ultimate from what the blessed God has in mind. Proverbs 15. Started speaking [00:10:11] about the purpose of God or the counsel of God or predestination or foreknowledge, election, any of these terms. I suppose I was tempted to be put off and to switch off and to say, well, I'm just a novice. This is way beyond me. And I suppose I didn't learn these things as quickly as I should have done. What we've had so far is not beyond the understanding of the simple, sincere mind of a believer in Christ. And so it will be as we go through. Proverbs 15 verse 22. There is a relation between purpose and counsel. Self-explanatory, isn't it? There is a purpose, something in mind, [00:11:08] a plan has been devised in order that that plan might be worked out. There is something else needed as an aid in order that the plan might be executed. And Proverbs 15 says that that agent, in order that the purpose might be realised, is that which is termed counsel. Counsel. God has certain things in mind, his purpose. He has counseled with himself in order that the plan might be executed in accordance with his will. Another term which we look at. But simple, basic [00:12:01] relationship. The purpose is fundamental and counsel is required in order that the purpose might be brought to pass. Proverbs chapter 20. Every purpose is established by counsel. The purpose is what is in mind, the counsel is the agent by which the plan is brought to pass. That's we need look at it, that really. We have many other verses to look at. I would like to encourage us all. If there's a word that stumbles us, a word in Scripture that the Holy Ghost teaches, if we think we haven't really got a very good grasp of it, with the help of the Scriptures, with the aid of a concordance, we can see where the word is used and how it is used and we can [00:13:04] build up an understanding of what the term means. Now we've looked at Psalm 33, Proverbs 15, Proverbs 20. We'll now look at Isaiah, linking this with Psalm 33, the thoughts of his heart. Proverbs 15, 20, the purpose of God. See if what we read here, in the context of the use of the word purpose, if it justifies,

if it makes valid the suggestions that have been made already. Isaiah. First of all, the positive side. Here we have it. God says, I've thought it, I've committed myself to it, I have purposed it, it will happen. Because he has the power to put it [00:14:06] into effect. Again, what an encouragement in the last days of the dispensation, when everything that's been committed to man in responsibility seems to be cascading away, everything just being dissolved in ruin, to be able to say that the Lord has spoken and this is his word, I have purposed it, it shall surely come to pass. Our confidence is not in ourselves, our confidence is in the God of purpose, who from the outset has had his plan in mind, even before we know the detail of what it is. We have these statements implanted in the word of God, that God has committed himself [00:15:04] to his purpose, what he has in mind. As I have purposed, so shall it stand. Now, look at the negative side of it. The nation of Israel, or what was left of it, under the Gentile yoke, successively four Gentile nations to oppress it. They'd read the promises of God. Has it all been a ghastly mistake? Has our faith in Jehovah been misplaced? Has the purpose of God gone awry?

The Lord hath spoken. More than that, the Lord of hosts hath sworn. [00:16:05] He's not only affirmed, he's committed himself by oath. And because there is no greater, he has committed himself to himself. To himself. He hath sworn by himself, as we read in another place. The nation thought, it's all gone wrong. Their God says, no, it will eventually come to pass.

And in the later verse there, in verse 27, the Lord of hosts, the Lord who has every resource, he hath purposed, who shall disannul it? Who shall confound the plan, the purpose of the mighty God? No one will. Encouraging, isn't it? That in going back to the beginning, we learn that the end is secure. [00:17:03] Chapter 46, verses 9 to 11. Notice the firm ring of assurance in every scripture where the purpose of God is mentioned. No doubt implied at all. He starts with the glory of his own person. I am God, there is none else. I am God, there is none like me.

Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done. God is eternal. To our finite creature minds, sometimes we think or are tempted to think that something that has been declared to be going to happen in the future is not as sure [00:18:01] as something that's already happened in history. Well, certainly that's true in the ways of men. But with God who is eternal, when he says something is going to happen, it's just as sure as though it has already happened. Do we believe it? It's what scripture affirms again and again. All these statements relate it and in the context of the purpose of God. And again, central to these verses, my counsel shall stand. Again, we'll defer more detail about that. I will do all my pleasure. I find it relatively easy, I hope, to distinguish between things like election for knowledge and predestination. Terms we hope to look at. I find it very difficult to distinguish between terms that come almost, if not quite, [00:19:10] synonymously in scripture. The will of God, the pleasure of God, the purpose of God.

God has certain things in mind. He has committed himself to it and there is no doubt implied because it still hasn't happened. It's just as sure to happen as history which has already been recorded because the eternal God, who is the same yesterday and today and forever, has committed himself. I have spoken it. I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it. I will also do it. Here again, he says, calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country. God may well, and he does, use agents or tools.

[00:20:12] He used Gentile nations as disciplinary tools when his earthly people were disobeying him. When his earthly people were disobedient. Well, that still doesn't imply any doubt because if one tool that he takes up to accomplish his will, if his agent for the moment oversteps the mark, God says

enough, judges him for it and uses someone else. The plan is unchanged. The purpose is predetermined and because God has committed himself to it, it will surely come to pass. Now, there are others but that's all we look at in the Old Testament. Romans chapter 8. This is a sequence which is given and we do well to take account of it. [00:21:07] Now, one of them is tonight's subject, the purpose of God. But just to demonstrate what I mean, I read from verse 28 through to verse 33. Now, I've read that whole section, how full it is.

I will take account of this. It begins in the purpose of God. It is based upon the love of God and the work of Christ. Wherever we get a scheme of blessing delineated, somewhere in the context, we'll find the love of God as the cause. We'll find the work of Christ as the only [00:22:04] righteous basis upon which the blessing could be made available and the Holy Spirit, the only power by whom it can be enjoyed. Here we have it then. There is this wonderful scheme of blessing. We cannot look at all these terms tonight, beginning with the purpose of God. So again, God has a plan to which he has committed himself, which involves these other things. And God can righteously lavish upon us every blessing and all kinds of blessing because he spared not his own son. Again, let us recognize however clear the thesis in Scripture, however plain the teaching, it is never cold and academic. [00:23:06] It is always related to the depths of the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here, the purpose of God, we are assured that every blessing that God has purposed will be brought to pass, made available and enjoyed by those who are the called according to the purpose of God. The end result is only possible because God has committed himself to it. Now, it's because we've read general verses, universal truths in the Psalms and in Proverbs and Isaiah, universal statements that apply in every generation and dispensation, it's because our minds have been conditioned by those verses that we have the feel for what [00:24:01] Romans 8 has to say. With this great addendum, it necessitated the work of Christ, that God should deal unsparingly in righteous judgment and in wonderful love for us. This is the basis upon which the purpose of God has been secured. Chapter 9, verse 11. We learn from the parentheses of Scripture, little added bits put in brackets, chapter 9, verse 11, the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth. Well, here again, [00:25:01] not so much here a cross-reference to counsel or predestination or other things, but in speaking of the purpose of God, the term election comes in, the term calling comes in, again, a very comprehensive term, the calling of God. But this little sentence in brackets, or part of a sentence in brackets, verse 11, is itself in a chapter which is part of a parenthetical statement.

The teaching, chapters 1 to 8, the doctrine, the response, the duties of those who have been blessed, the practical answer to what God has done in blessing, is given in chapters 12 to 16. In verses 9 to 11, you have three parenthetical chapters where the Apostle pauses and says, now, [00:26:08] in case you're wondering about the position of the nation of Israel, and then he goes into a digression, and again, related to the purpose of God, to a keen mind which might say, what about those verses in Isaiah that God has committed himself to the blessing of the nation of Israel as such and upon earth? Has that been abandoned? Has that plan fallen through? Has God had to change his mind? Paul says not a bit of it. He says the nation of Israel has had to be put to one side for the moment, yes, because they have failed in responsibility, and yes, because God has a larger [00:27:07] plan which has always been there, centred in Christ, but hadn't come to light in the world till the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, presented himself to the nation of Israel, was refused and ultimately crucified. And then God is able to draw the curtain aside further and demonstrate and declare that he's now able to manifest himself in a greater, more profound way than he's ever done before. This is to the Hebrews, having previously declared himself partially, he's now declared himself fully in Son. [00:28:05] And in the midst of this parenthetical section where he says, don't worry, God

hasn't been disappointed. God hasn't had to change. He's put the nation of Israel to one side, and the God who's put them to one side will bring them back and bring them into their blessing when the time is ripe. And in the middle of that section, he puts this verse 11. He says, when you think about it, you know, God's plan for the nation of Israel was before any of these Jews, this present generation of Jews, was alive, before they had been conceived. He says, their blessing cannot depend upon their responsibility. It has been in the mind and the heart of God from the outset. Before any of them were brought into creation, [00:29:07] God had blessing in mind for the nation. What we learn in a larger way is true in this limited national way of the nation of Israel. And in that context, we get the words, the purpose of God. Here for the nation of Israel, true in principle of his complete purpose in Christ, the purpose of God, according to election, will stand. Not of works, not because the people brought into the blessing deserve it, but because of the calling of God. There's much more to calling than God calling a name and man answering. There's much more to it than that. It's a much more positive consideration. Well, in other words, the calling of God without repentance, without changing his mind, is [00:30:07] determined not by how man in responsibility answers, not by how the nation of Israel responds. It is determined by the purpose of God and the calling of God, which is sure. So that which is an apparent exception, Romans 9, 10 and 11, this digression about the nation of Israel only confirms what other scriptures have read. Ephesians 1. Well, read the whole of the epistle to the Ephesians to get some understanding of the purpose of God. The kind of phrase that comes in verse one, the will of God. Verse five, the good pleasure of his will. [00:31:03] Verse nine, the mystery of his will, which he has purposed in himself. Verse 11, the counsel of his own will, and so on.

The epistle, yes, chapter one in particular, uses these terms which are almost, if not quite, the same. I picked out verse 11 because it has the word in it. Verse nine says, his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself. All right, his good pleasure. This is not the frown of a severe God. The heart of God is deeply involved in his good God is deeply involved in this, which he has purposed in himself. He enjoys it and he's going [00:32:04] to enjoy it. And those who've been brought into the blessing of it, we are also going to enjoy it. A special period of a thousand years has been set aside in God's plan.

Ephesians, particularly Ephesians one, tells us about it. And it tells us this, God has set aside a special period where here upon earth, where God has been opposed. Here upon earth, where men have responded with hate to his love. Here upon earth, where Satan has tried every device to thwart the purpose of God. Here upon earth, it will be demonstrated for a full cycle of time in the world to come that God's plan [00:33:04] is centred in Christ. It's based, personally, it's based upon the work of Christ, has its origin in the love of God, in the very heart of God. And in his great grace, God has purposed to attach to the object of his love, the son, those who are his. Now Ephesians one and others tells us a little bit about it. And here, well, almost 30 times, we get references to the fact that if we have blessing at all, and it's wonderful blessing, it's not what we are in ourselves or what we've done in ourselves or for ourselves. [00:34:05] It's only available to us and to be enjoyed by us because we are in him. And again, and again, almost 30 times in the epistle, we are said to be in Christ, in Christ Jesus, in whom, in him, in himself, and so on. And here we have it in verse 11, in whom we have obtained an inheritance, not in ourselves, in him, because we are attached to him, we are brought into blessing in relationship with himself, being predestinated, we not look at that tonight, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Again, the overlapping, predestination, purpose, counsel, but here the blessing is traced to the origin, [00:35:06] and that origin is in the purpose of God, the God who has committed himself to all this. That, and then something of the delineation of the blessing, that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ, and so on. Now I'll have to leave that for the moment there, but cast your eyes over that chapter, verse 21, well let's read verse 20 to the end, which tells us the end in view, in the

purpose of God, which he wrote in Christ, verse 20, when he raised him from the dead, set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. [00:36:05] God is going to declare in the world to come. Hebrews 2, Hebrews 5, here again, verse 21, the world which is to come. God will make plain that he hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. It's on the basis of the work of Christ. God has established him. God has endowed him in glory and honour, having raised him from among the dead, that there should be those attached to him to enjoy the blessing, which finds its origin in the purpose of God. Chapter 3, verse 11, again, blessing, you follow through in the scriptures. You could add Ephesians [00:37:04] 3, 11, as a rider, according to the eternal purpose, again, singular, and it's eternal, didn't begin in time. Before time began, in the heart of the blessed God, he committed himself, he purposed. What he purposed in eternity has been the subject of the work of Christ in time, and the blessing will last throughout eternity. Second Timothy, chapter 1. The verse starts, God has saved us.

I've met earnest believers who believe that Jesus died and rose again, who after 20, 30, 40 years, still ask the question, can we be sure that we are saved? [00:38:02] Is it not a vain hope? Oh, that they would listen to the words of the apostle Paul to Timothy. Timothy, as we know, was a little timid. I don't know whether all Timothys are timid, gentle young men, but here was one, and to him, with assurance, comes the word, God has saved us. No doubt about it. How can he be so sure? Not according to our works. If in Romans 9, he says God will not be thwarted by the disobedient works of the nation of Israel, God needs no help from the good works of the believer. What a sorry thing it would be if eternal blessing depended in any degree at all upon anything that you or I could do. We would have no assurance of salvation, but to be told that we are saved because God has saved us, [00:39:08] on the basis of the work of Christ, and that this blessing has been given to us, not in ourselves, but in Christ Jesus, before the world began. Well, what assurance it gives us. At the end of our responsible pathway, as at the beginning, we owe it all to him, not dependent upon our works. Now, I won't say any more, because if the Lord will, and we have a reading tomorrow, I would suggest that we look at 2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 7, or certainly 8, through to verse 12, so we can leave more detailed consideration until then. Notice in passing, that again, with salvation, with purpose, there is reference to the holy [00:40:04] calling of God. Lastly, 1 John chapter 3, John's first epistle. Pardon the negative side of this verse, just so happens this is the last one in this sequence as the scriptures come, but it has a very positive end. He that committed sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. Blessing has its origin in God. Sin has its origin in the devil. Those who sin are doing the devil's work.

Has sin, and the introduction of sin, and the committing of sin, by responsible man, made any difference at all to the purpose of God? Will God's plans fail to be brought into fruition? [00:41:07] For this purpose, here we have it again, for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. I think it's a nice little touch at the end of these verses on the purpose of God. God was not overtaken. God was not surprised. God was not taken unawares by the activities of Satan, knowing all things from the beginning. It wasn't God's purpose that the devil should sin, that was Satan's responsibility. It is the purpose of God, part of the purpose of God, that nothing that man, demon or devil can do will thwart the purpose of God, because from the outset [00:42:05] the purpose of God involved the coming into the world of the Son of God, that he might bring to naught the works of the devil. What might seem a hindrance or a difficulty is seen to have been seen in advance by the God who had blessing in his heart from the outset, and having purposed us for blessing, as we sang, that here we have it, that it needed the incoming into the world of the Son of

God to bring the purpose of God into effect. There are many hymns that highlight the purpose of God, we've sung one, we're going to sing another one, 415, many aspects of the purpose of God, but this is entirely positive. Father, spring and source of blessing, grateful praise to thee we [00:43:05] bring, and well we might, when we brought into the intelligence of the purpose of God. Verse 2, thine eternal gracious purpose, now to us in Christ, not in ourselves, in Christ is shown.

Verse 3, brought to know thy well beloved, we adore thee God and Father, may thy name exalted be. This is the response of the soul that's brought into an intelligent appreciation of the purpose of God, let us sing it as those to whom it means much. 415.