

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

TEXT: EPH. 1:8-14

Introduction:

1. Tonight as we continue on in our study of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, I would like to draw your attention to the word "purpose":
 - "according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" (1:9b).
 - "being predestinated to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (1:11).
2. I would like to speak tonight on "The Eternal Purpose of God."
3. God has only one purpose, though there are various aspects of it. God's eternal purpose is fully brought before us in this passage of Scripture that we are looking at tonight.
4. In carrying out His purpose God created Adam and Eve, and later God sent a flood upon the earth but saved Noah and his family. Later God scattered the people, but chose Abraham and upon his seed He established the nation of Israel.
5. It was part of God's purpose that the Israelites be different from the other nations, that they would be a testimony for God. It was through them that God sent His prophets, His Word, and most importantly His only begotten Son.
6. This was all according to God's eternal purpose. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).
7. God's eternal purpose includes the second coming of Christ to establish His kingdom here on earth. I will say more about this later.
8. These are all various aspects of God's one eternal purpose.

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE...

I. HE HAS GIVEN TO US WISDOM AND PRUDENCE (1:8).

II. HE HAS PREDESTINATED US (1:11; cf. 1:5).

III. HE HAS SEALED US WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (1:13, 14).

I. THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE, HE HAS GIVEN TO US WISDOM & PRUDENCE (1:8).

1. Notice the word “abounded” (1:8). This indicates an overabundance of wisdom and prudence, bestowed upon us by our gracious God. The great preacher and writer John Bunyan wrote another well-known book before *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and that was *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.
2. That is the idea here – God “hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” (1:8).
3. Prudence is the effective use of wisdom. Right thinking will lead to right actions.
4. What this is saying is that God has graciously shared His plans and purposes with us. His desire is that we should know His eternal purpose. God wants us to know His perfect will (cf. Col. 1:9).
5. Therefore, God has given us wisdom and prudence (Eph. 1:8) and spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9) that we may have “the knowledge of His will” (Col. 1:9; cf. Eph. 5:17).
6. God wants us to understand His purpose and see which way things are going. The unsaved man has no idea where things are going, but we do.
7. History is moving in a definite direction. We can see “the writing on the wall,” though worldly people cannot.
8. The other day the newspapers ran an article about the Euphrates River drying up (cf. Rev. 16:12).
9. “The shrinking of the Euphrates, a river so crucial to the birth of civilization that the Book of Revelation prophesied its drying up as a sign of the end times, has decimated farms along its banks, has left fishermen impoverished

and has depleted riverside towns as farmers flee to the cities looking for work” (*NY Times*, July 13, 2009).

10. The Bible predicts that there will be a one-world religion, and a one-world government with a one-world currency, and this will all be controlled by the antichrist.
11. “Russian President Dmitry Medvedev illustrated his call for a supranational currency to replace the dollar by pulling from his pocket a sample coin of a united future world currency” (Bloomberg News Service).
12. I found both these stories on Joel Rosenberg’s weblog. Mr. Rosenberg has written several best-selling books. People are amazed at how he seems to predict world events. He does not predict them; he knows what is going to happen because he studies the Bible.
13. This principle is taught in the Bible (cf. Dan. 9:1, 2).
14. God has “made known to us the mystery of His will” (1:9). The word “mystery” as it is used in the NT has a different meaning than the way we normally use it (e.g. a “murder mystery” or Sherlock Holmes mystery).
15. “A ‘mystery’ in Scripture is a previously hidden truth, now divinely revealed, but in which a supernatural element still remains despite the revelation” (Scofield Bible, p. 1014).
16. Some NT mysteries include:
 - “The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11).
 - The mystery of Israel’s spiritual blindness, which will continue “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25).
 - The mystery of our translation into heaven, when we shall be given brand new resurrection bodies (I Cor. 15:51).
 - “The mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:3, 4, 9).
 - The “great mystery” concerning Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).
 - “The mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19).

- “The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26, 27).
 - “The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col. 2:2, 3, 9).
 - “The mystery of iniquity” (II Thess. 2:7).
 - “The mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (I Tim. 3:16)
 - “The mystery of the seven stars” which “are the angels of the seven churches” (Rev. 1:20).
 - “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5, 7)
17. God works all things “according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (1:9), and “after the counsel of His own will” (1:11) – not my will or your will, but “His own will.”
 18. We have already looked at several doctrinal words in our study of Ephesians: election, predestination, adoption, redemption, and mystery. Next is “dispensation,” which literally means an “economy” or a “plan of administration.”
 19. H.A. Ironside wrote that “there are various economies running through the Word of God. A dispensation, an economy, then, is that particular order or condition of things prevailing in one special age which does not necessarily prevail in another.”
 20. Charles Ryrie is more succinct: “A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purposes.” This definition ties in with our message tonight: that we might know God’s eternal purpose.
 21. One of God’s eternal purposes is for Christ to return and set up His millennial kingdom. Paul refers to this here as “the dispensation of the fulness of times” (1:10).
 22. We are presently in the church age or the “dispensation of grace.” This will be followed by “the dispensation of the fulness of times.”

23. In other words, God has a special dispensation or economy or plan of administration for the final era of human history on this earth. All human history is heading towards this goal – for our Lord to establish His throne as Head over “all things” (1:10).
24. This is speaking of universal dominion, not universal salvation.

II. THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE, HE HAS PREDESTINATED US (1:11; cf. 1:5).

1. We already spent some time studying the doctrine of predestination. The word means simply “marked out beforehand.”
2. Webster’s Dictionary says predestine means “predetermine or foreordain.”
3. In other words, God has a plan and everything is going along according to God’s plan, or “according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (1:9).
4. To avoid confusion, two principles must be kept in mind:
 - A. In the Bible, predestination is never used in reference to unsaved people. If a sinner goes to hell, it is not because it was predestined but because he refused to repent of his sin and believe in Christ.
 - B. The purpose of predestination is for God to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).
6. “Predestination is that effective exercise of the will of God by which things before determined by Him are brought to pass” (Scofield Bible, p. 1250).
7. God predestines both Jew and Gentile (2:14-16). Paul’s reference to “we” (1:12) means “we Jews,” and “ye” (1:13) means “ye Gentiles.”
8. He refers in 1:14 to both – “our inheritance.”
9. When Paul speaks of obtaining this inheritance (1:11), it is based upon faith in Christ (1:12b).

10. This inheritance has not been fully realized yet. That is why Paul speaks later of “the earnest (pledge) of our inheritance” (1:14). This inheritance looks forward to the time when all true believers, both Jew and Gentile, will reign with Christ in His millennial kingdom.
11. This has been marked out by God before we were even born. From all eternity God has marked out or predestinated those who were “to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29).
12. Therefore, the purpose of this predestination was “that we should be to the praise of His glory...” (1:12).

III. THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE, HE HAS SEALED US WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT (1:13, 14).

1. Notice the sequence:
 - (1) They “heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (1:13). No one can be saved without “the word of truth” (cf. Rom. 10:17; I Peter 1:23).
 - (2) They “believed” (1:13).
 - (3) They “were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13).
2. Every genuine believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit the moment He is saved. When a person trusts Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit as a sign that he belongs to God and that he will be kept safe by God until the time he receives his glorified body.
3. Our church had to order a seal to verify that we are incorporated. In legal matters, a seal indicates ownership and security. Likewise in spiritual matters – the Holy Spirit seals us as God’s property and guarantees our preservation until the day of redemption (cf. Eph. 4:30).
4. He is the “Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13). He was promised by both God the Father and God the Son.

5. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28, 29).
6. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16, 17).
7. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7).
8. “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).
9. “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:4, 5).
10. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

CONCLUSION:

1. The Holy Spirit is the “earnest” (pledge or guarantee) of our inheritance. When someone goes to purchase a building or property, the seller wants a down payment as a pledge or guarantee that you are in “earnest.”
2. As the seal, the Holy Spirit guarantees that we will be kept safely for the inheritance. As the earnest, He guarantees the inheritance will be kept securely for us (Eph. 1:14).