

Christian Students @ SAC
Bible Study - Spring 2022
Week 7

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE
Chapter 7

ETERNAL PURPOSE
(1)

Scripture Reading: Rom. 3:23; 8:5, 16-18, 21, 29-30; John 1:14; 12:24; 20:17; Heb. 2:10-11; 2 Pet. 1:4

Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom. 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

Rom. 8:17 And if children, heirs also; on the one hand, heirs of God; on the other, joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him] that we may also be glorified with Him.

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed upon us.

Rom. 8:21 In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

Rom. 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 20:17 Jesus said to her, Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.

Heb. 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Heb. 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers,

2 Pet. 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

The Eternal Purpose

We have spoken of the need of revelation, of faith and consecration, if we are to live a normal Christian life. But unless we see the end God has in view, we shall never clearly understand why these steps are necessary to lead us to that end. So before we consider further the question of inward experience, let us first look at the great divine goal before us.

What is God's purpose in creation and what is His purpose in redemption? It may be summed up in two phrases, one from each of our two sections of Romans. It is "the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

In Romans 3:23 we read: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." God's purpose for man was glory, but sin thwarted that purpose by causing man to miss God's glory. When we think of sin we instinctively think of the judgment it brings; we invariably associate it with condemnation and hell. Man's thought is always of the punishment that will come to him if he sins, but God's thought is always of the glory man will miss if he sins. The result of sin is that we forfeit God's glory: the result of redemption is that we are qualified again for glory. God's purpose in redemption is glory, glory, glory.

Firstborn Among Many Brethren

This consideration takes us forward into Romans chapter 8, where the topic is developed in verses 16 to 18 and again in verses 29 and 30. Paul says: "We are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. 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-ward" (Romans

8:16-18); and again: “Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30). What was God's objective? It was that His Son Jesus Christ might be the firstborn among many brethren, all of whom should be conformed to His image. How did God realize that objective? “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Thus God's purpose in creation and redemption was to make Christ the firstborn Son among many glorified sons. That may perhaps at first convey very little to many of us, but let us look into it more carefully.

In John 1:14 we are told that the Lord Jesus was God's only begotten Son: “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father).” That He was God's only begotten Son signifies that God had no other Son but this one. He was with the Father from all eternity. But, we are told, God was not satisfied that Christ should remain the only begotten Son; He wanted also to make Him His first begotten. How could an only begotten Son become a first begotten? The answer is simple: by the Father having more children. If you have but one son, then he is the only begotten, but if thereafter you have other children, then the only begotten becomes the first begotten.

The divine purpose in creation and redemption was that God should have many children. He wanted us, and could not be satisfied without us. Some time ago I called to see Mr. George Cutting, the writer of the well-known tract *Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment*. When I was ushered into the presence of this old saint of ninety-three years, he took my hand in his and in a quiet, deliberate way he said: “Brother, do you know, I cannot do without Him? And do you know, He cannot do without me?” Though I was with him for over an hour, his great age and physical frailty made any sustained conversation impossible. But what remains in my memory of that interview was his frequent repetition of these two questions: “Brother, do you know, I cannot do without Him? And do you know, *He cannot do without me?*”

In reading the story of the prodigal son most people are impressed with all the troubles the prodigal meets; they are occupied in thinking what a bad time he is having. But that is not the point of the parable. “My son ... was lost, and is found”—there is the heart of the story. It is not a question of what the son suffers, but of what the Father loses. *He* is the sufferer; *he* is the loser. A sheep is lost: whose is the loss? The shepherd's. A coin is lost: whose is the loss? The woman's. A son is lost: whose is the loss? The Father's. That is the lesson of Luke chapter 15.

The Lord Jesus was the only begotten Son, and as the only begotten He has no brothers. But the Father sent the Son in order that the only begotten might also be the first begotten, and the beloved Son have many brethren. There you have the whole story of the Incarnation and the Cross; and there you have at the last, the purpose of God fulfilled in His “bringing many sons unto glory” (Hebrews 2:10).

In Romans 8:29 we read of “many brethren”; in Hebrews 2:10 of “many sons.” From the point of view of the Lord Jesus they are “brethren”; from the point of view of God the Father they are “sons.” Both words in this context convey the idea of maturity. God is seeking full-grown sons; but He does not stop even there. For He does not want His sons to live in a barn or a garage or a field; He wants them in His home; He wants them to share His glory. That is the explanation of Romans 8:30: “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Sonship—the full expression of His Son—is God's goal in the many sons. How could He bring that about? By justifying them and then by glorifying them. In His dealings with them God will never stop short of that goal. He set Himself to have sons, and to have those sons, mature and responsible, with Him in glory. He made provision for the whole of heaven to be peopled with glorified sons. That was His purpose in the redemption of mankind.

The Grain Of Wheat

But how could God's only begotten Son become His first begotten? The method is explained in John 12:24: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.” Who was that grain? It was the Lord Jesus. In the whole universe God put this one grain of wheat into the ground and it died, and in resurrection the only begotten grain became the first begotten grain, and from the one grain there have sprung many grains.

In respect of His divinity the Lord Jesus remains uniquely “the only begotten Son of God.” Yet there is a sense in which, from the resurrection onward through all eternity, He is also the first begotten, and His life from that time is found in many brethren. For we who are born of the Spirit are made thereby “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), though not, mark you, as of ourselves but only, as we shall see in a moment, in dependence upon God and by virtue of our being “in Christ.” We have “received the spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God” (Romans 8:15-16). It was by way of the Incarnation and the Cross that the Lord Jesus made this possible. Therein was the Father-heart of God satisfied, for in the Son's obedience unto death the Father has secured His many sons.

The first and the twentieth chapters of John are in this respect most precious. In the beginning of his Gospel John tells us that Jesus was “the only begotten from the Father.” At the end of his Gospel he tells us how, after he had died and risen again, Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, “Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God” (John 20:17). Hitherto in this Gospel the Lord had spoken often of “the Father” or of “my Father.” Now, in resurrection, He adds, “... and your Father.” It is the eldest Son, the first begotten, speaking. By His death and resurrection many brethren have been brought into God's family, and so, in the same verse He uses the very name for them, calling

them “my brethren.” By doing this he affirms that he “is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11).

Questions

1. How would you explain God’s eternal purpose in your own words?
2. Use Roman 8:29-30 and then John 12:24 to explain the process of God’s eternal purpose