

# God's Eternal Purposes

- Here's what God's Word says about hope:
  - **Romans 15:13 ESV - (13) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**
    - We abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, as a result of believing God
      - The hope we have by the power of the Holy Spirit is much greater than
        - Hope we derive from anything on this plane
    - Not only that, but God will fill us with ALL JOY and PEACE as we trust in Him
  - Our Challenge:
    - You and I need to lift our eyes past the circumstances that are right in front of us, and join God where He is on his ETERNAL plane.

## God's Purposes are Eternal

- God's Eternal purpose for the Gospel
- **Ephesians 3:6-13 ESV - (6) This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.**
  - Paul is talking about the fact that Jesus didn't just come to save the Jews
  - He came to save the whole world.
  - As God's chosen people, the Jews struggled to accept this.
- **(7) Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. (8) To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, (9) and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, (10) so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.**
  - Here we see Paul talking about how God is calling him to participate in spreading the good news to the Gentiles (you and me)
  - SO THAT, through the church, God's manifold wisdom will be made known to all creation (including angels)
  - Remember that beforehand, the church didn't exist.
- **(11) This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, (12) in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (13) So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.**
  - Remember me just saying that "God's purposes are ETERNAL?"
    - Jesus was the fulfillment of God's Eternal Purpose to bring hope to the entire world and bring glory to himself, going way back before he laid the foundations of the Earth.
    - All throughout the OT, God's eternal purpose of sending Jesus to save lost was in place, but it wasn't fully revealed yet.
    - Throughout the OT, God shared glimpses of his eternal purpose
      - **Isaiah 53:5-6 ESV - (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (6) All we like**

**sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

- These words are familiar to us, but...
- 700 years before Christ was born, without fully understanding the details of what he was writing, Isaiah was explaining the lengths that Jesus would go to in order to fulfill God's eternal purpose to save mankind.

## We Don't Always Understand God's Ways

- Isaiah goes on to give us perspective about God's ways:
  - **Isaiah 55:8-11 ESV - (8) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. (9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (10) "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, (11) so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**
    - We get this picture of a raindrop falling from the sky, watering the earth, causing grain to grow, producing more seed, and feeding people.
      - God has that much purpose in every single raindrop
    - In the same way, EVERY word that has been spoken by God has a particular purpose which WILL be accomplished.
      - We have no concept for all the ways in which God is working to accomplish His eternal purposes.

## God's Ways are Not Centered Around Us

- Our nature is to put ourselves at the center of our circumstances
  - We tend to categorize things as "good" or "bad" based on the impact it has on us
  - All throughout the Bible, we see stories of all kinds of people
  - We learn from them too:
    - There are examples of people whom we should emulate
      - People who believed God
        - Noah, Abraham, Moses, David
        - These men knew that they belonged to God and were made to be used for his eternal purposes
        - Their circumstances (good or bad) did not dictate their obedience
    - And there are people whose lives are intended to be a warning to us
      - These are the ones who chose to live on the worldly plane
        - Cain, Pharaoh, Herodias, Rich Young Ruler
          - These people thought that life was about them and their happiness
          - They were consumed by their circumstances
            - Fear, opportunity, lust, greed, pride
- Paul gives us some perspective about God's purposes

- He is writing to Timothy and was just speaking of Timothy's sincere faith:
  - **2 Timothy 1:6-9 ESV - (6) For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, (7) for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.**
    - God gives us a spirit that rises above that which comes natural to man
    - He gives us a spirit that comes from HIM, which is characterized by power, and love and self control.
  - **(8) Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, (9) who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,**
    - THEREFORE - "In light of this supernatural spirit that God has entrusted you with..."
      - Don't be ashamed of the Gospel (no spirit of fear)
      - Share in the suffering for the Gospel (motivated by this spirit of power, love, and self-control)
    - You were saved and called to a HOLY CALLING - (part of God's eternal purposes)
      - He didn't pick us because of our works (not because we were good enough)
      - But because of his own purpose and grace, which was established in Jesus before the ages began
        - When you and I were saved, we didn't invite Jesus to become part of our lives.
        - He invited us to be part of His ETERNAL purposes
- You and I are not called to a faith that is about us, or our circumstances
  - As we look at the sum of anyone's life, it really comes down to eternal significance.
    - **James 4:13-17 ESV - (13) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"-- (14) yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. (15) Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." (16) As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (17) So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.**
      - James points out that our lives are just a mist
      - And we are called to live according to the WILL OF GOD rather than the for the fleeting pleasures of this world

## Believers Must Have an Eternal Perspective

### Storms of Life Come Along

- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ESV - (16) So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not**

**to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

- Despite our circumstances, we have no reason to lose heart.
  - This life is short, and this body is temporary.
    - One day, it will be God's perfect will to call you home.
    - That's the earthly perspective in that passage
  - Now for the eternal perspective.
    - Our inner self is being renewed day by day
      - This is the believer who is walking by faith.
    - The biggest baddest challenges that we face in this short life are "light momentary afflictions"
      - Compared to the eternal weight of glory that awaits us
    - We are called to look at the eternal things that are unseen rather than the temporary things that are visible to us now
- Jesus promised hard times for us as he was about to face the cross:
  - **John 16:32-33 ESV - (32) Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. (33) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."**
    - Jesus was going to be betrayed by his friends, as they will scatter when he is arrested
    - He's stepping into his greatest tribulation, and he promises that on this plane, in THIS world, his followers will also experience tribulation
    - But Jesus tells us to take heart because he has already overcome the world
- Let's go back to one of our earlier passages:
  - **2 Timothy 1:8-12 ESV - (8) Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, (9) who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, (10) and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (11) for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, (12) which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.**
    - Paul speaks of his suffering for the gospel
    - He also speaks of the work of Christ, who abolished death
      - And brought life and immortality through the gospel
    - In the face of his challenges, he keeps his eyes on God's eternal purposes
- J. Vernon McGee calls providence, "The Hand of God in the Glove of Circumstance"
  - God works through our circumstances everyday: through the victories and the trials
  - Joseph was thrown into a pit by his own brothers, and was sold into slavery to serve a man named, Potiphar:
    - **Genesis 39:1-3 ESV - (1) Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. (2) The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in**

**the house of his Egyptian master. (3) His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.**

- He was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife
  - **Genesis 39:19-21 ESV - (19) As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. (20) And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. (21) But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.**
- Joseph didn't go through these things alone, because the Lord was with him.
  - While in that prison, he interpreted a dream for the cupbearer to Pharaoh
  - He told Pharaoh about Joseph, which gave Joseph the opportunity to interpret two of Pharaoh's dreams
  - He gained favor in Pharaoh's eyes and was installed as his right-hand man
  - Joseph was able to save his family from a terrible famine
  - Which was just one of the times that God kept his promise to preserve Israel
  - Through which Jesus would eventually come as the savior of the world
  - Which was God's eternal purpose
- Each of these events that happened looked like circumstances of life.
  - It would have been easy for Joseph to get bogged down and distracted by his circumstances.
  - Instead, he knew that the Lord was with him, and he believed God
  - We clearly see the hand of God in the glove of circumstance in Joseph's life

## God Promises To Be With Us

- **Hebrews 13:5-8 ESV - (5) Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (7) Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**
  - What a great time to be reminded to stay free from the love of money
    - We only have room for one true love
    - Job tells us that "the Lord gives and the Lord takes away"
    - We should hold everything He has given us with an open hand
  - God promises us that "He will never leave us nor forsake us", which means that we can do this life without fear.
    - Here's some eternal perspective for you, to the question, "what can man do to me?", you can probably think of a lot of things that they can do to you in this life.
      - The point here is that they can't take anything eternal away from you.
  - Then we see the great reminder that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever"
    - These are trying times, but...
    - He hasn't forgotten you, he knows what you are going through, and he will carry you through all of it!

- Jesus is with you just as much on your worst day as he was on your best day.
  - Because Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever
- **Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV - (8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**
  - Paul tells us how we are saved: by grace through faith
  - He goes on to tell us how you and I are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works

## God Calls Us to Walk in the Works for Which He Prepared Us

- I am reminded of Esther
  - God had His hand on Esther's life
    - Parents died, but her cousin Mordecai raised her as his own daughter
    - King of Persia commanded all of the beautiful young virgins to be gathered so that he could choose a new queen from among them
    - She was quite beautiful and the king placed a crown upon her and made her his queen
    - The king's second in command convinced him to have all of the Jews killed
    - Mordecai went to Esther and urged her to risk her life by intervening with the king:
      - **Esther 4:14 ESV - (14) For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"**
  - All of the circumstances in Esther's life led to this point where she realized that God had prepared her for this specific moment.
    - God used Esther to change the king's mind and save the Jewish people
    - Which was part of the eternal purposes of God
- So here we are, in a time of uncertainty on THIS plane.
  - As believers, let us consider how God has positioned us perfectly "for such a time as this"?
    - As our friends and family and neighbors look around for hope, we are the ones who can show it to them.
    - Let's keep our eyes on eternity.