

::R0098 : page 4::

GOD'S PURPOSE

It is God's purpose to save a lost world. This work is committed into the hands of Jesus Christ, whose work is expressive of the wisdom, power and love of God. The end gained is the *fruit* of God's love. An imperfect view of the *fruit*, must cause an imperfect idea of the love itself, and the effect must be an injury to us. "A child is known by its doings," and "A tree is known by its fruit." The Lord says, "Come let us reason together," "are not my ways equal?" An appreciation of His ways and doings is akin to sympathy and fellowship. Knowledge and love are certainly related to each other;—love appreciated, produces love. "We love Him because He first loved us," and love makes obedience cheerful. Gratitude and love are the springs of successful human life. Oh, that we may be in sympathy with God's purpose. That purpose is variously expressed. "Her seed shall bruise thy head." Gen. 3:15. This threatening of death to the serpent means blessing to mankind. He destroys the enemy to deliver the captives. Heb. 2:14-15. The opening chapters of Genesis give the entrance of the curse of sin and death, and the last chapters of Revelations reveal the success of God's plan,—"There shall be no more curse." Rev. 22:3. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." (21:4). The history of the past is in harmony with human experience, and the hope revealed is in harmony with human necessities, and the Bible is thus shown to be in harmony with facts and with itself. What was implied in the threatening against the serpent, was expressed two thousand years later in God's covenant with Abraham: "In thy seed shall all nations—'kindreds'—'families'—of the Earth be blessed." From that time dates the *promise* of God, which the *law*, given four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul. Gal. 3:17. The divine nature or spirit is the basis of the success, and is imparted, not by law, which cannot give life (Ver. 21), but by the "exceeding great and precious promises." 2 Pet. 1:4. The going forth of the word of the Lord, in all ages, or in all stages of its development, must have reference to the great end; as when man builds for a home and its comforts, he keeps that in mind when the stones are being quarried, the timbers hewn, the foundation laid, and through all the steps of building. Of His own word the Lord says: "It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that

::R0099 : page 4::

which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isa. 55:11. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied." 53:10-11, "He shall not fail or be discouraged, until he shall have set judgment in the Earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." "He shall not quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed until He

bring forth judgment unto victory." "The Lord shall make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." 52:10. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him, for the kingdom is the Lord's and He is the Governor among the nations." Ps. 22.

"When Thy judgments are in the Earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Isa. 26:9. These are but a sample of the prophetic utterances dictated by the spirit of Christ, and the New Testament takes up the strain and carries it forward to the glad climax. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Jno. 1:29. "That was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "Behold we bring unto you glad tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people." "Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace and good will toward men."

"He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." "He gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time." "Because of His humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross." "Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth," &c. Phil. 2:9-10.

"All nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy judgments are made manifest." Rev. 15:4. These broad and sweeping statements are the common utterances of the Bible, in reference to the ultimate result of the work of Christ, and the only exception to the final salvation of all, is in the case of those who sin willfully after they have come to the knowledge of the truth; or who having been begotten of the spirit by the word of truth, fail to come to the second birth, and so *are not counted*. All who ever come to perfect spiritual manhood, that is, the image of God, will retain it, and when the work is finished sin and death will be unknown.

God's work is one of *order* as well as love, overlooking which the love is obscured. The consummation is to be reached by the various steps, called ages, each age having its own

::R0099 : page 5::

part of the work to do. No age has been too short for its purpose. The succession of ages indicates the progressive character of the plan. Before the flood but little law or light was given, and men were left to work out the natural life of sinful flesh to its legitimate consequence—death. The great fact must be *proved* that "All flesh is as grass." Until man has learned this lesson he knows not how truly to lay hold on the arm of the Lord extended to help. Sin existed, but was not imputed, nevertheless death reigned, even over the irresponsible. Rom. 5:13-14. Sin was not properly known, as "exceeding sinful," but was counted as in a dormant or "dead state." The sinner was conceited, until the law came. Says Paul: "I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known

lust unless the law had said: 'Thou shalt not covet.' But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin (existed but) was *dead*. For I was alive, without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin *revived* (lived *again*) and I died." Rom. 7:7-9.

It is clear that Paul is not speaking of the original entrance of sin and death, for sin revived but of the effect of the "law that was added because of transgression," to give the "knowledge of sin" and show it in its true character as "exceeding sinful." Ver. 13.

In the Patriarchal age the *Promise* of a Deliverer was given, and in the Jewish age, in addition to the giving of the law, which condemns man and cannot save, there was developed by types and prophecy much light in reference to the coming Saviour. God only dealt with the Jewish nation during that age, and they gained the impression that He cared little or nothing for the other nations. They were as the literal descendants of Abraham through Isaac, the "seed according to the flesh." But "the children of the flesh," says Paul, "are not the children of God, but the children of the *promise* are counted for the seed;" Rom. 9:8, and adds: "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise." Gal. 4:28. From all of which it is evident that the *church* of Christ is the Seed, that the gospel dispensation is the period for its development, and therefore the real work of bruising the serpent and blessing the nations belongs to an age after Christ comes and gathers His church to Himself and to a share of His glory. During this gospel dispensation the church has quite naturally fallen into a similar error as that of the Jews, that their dispensation was final, and that none could be blessed beyond. While the truth is that God, in the gospel age, has been "taking out a people for His *name*," for the very purpose of sharing with Him in the greater work of saving the world. That the church have been objects of His special care and love is true, and all the angels of heaven have been to the "heirs of salvation" ministers of mercy. Heb. 1. We can, with these facts before us, more fully appreciate what it is to be "*called according to His purpose*." That purpose is to bless the world in the ages to come. Eph. 2:7. Here is the High Calling of God in Jesus Christ. And to fit us for our work, we are called unto holiness, and called to pass through trials and peculiar difficulties, as fire to refine and purify us. "These light afflictions work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "And all things shall work together for good to them that love God;—to them that are the called according to His purpose."

In view of the exceeding weight of glory promised, we may well, like Paul, count all else loss that we may win Christ and be found in Him.

Oh, that we may forget the things that are behind, and keeping the eye on the mark, *press on* for the heavenly prize. Phil. 3:13-14.

J. H. P.

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