

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL #1

At the outset, I must state the burden on my heart: God has a purpose and plan; more specifically, it is the purpose and plan of the eons. I have written a three-volume book on this subject, so I refer you to this for details. However, my heart has been exercised lately over this matter, so I will endeavor to offer a brief summary and trust that, if you are hungry for more, you will read the book.

As I consider events that are happening in our day in light of the prophetic word, I am, almost continually, drawn back to God's purpose. Many speak or write of God's purpose, but it is generally, not always, focused on the here and now; God's purpose is focused on what His purpose is in the life of an individual believer, or in the life of a company of the Lord's people, or, even beyond this, in the life of the "church" throughout the world. So we hear of many encouragements and exhortations to individuals to discover and pursue God's purpose for their lives, even their destiny, and, more specifically, to know and exercise their particular ministry, calling, or gifting. We also hear of local assemblies or groups of ones joined together (denominational or nondenominational) pursuing what they believe is God's purpose or will for them or even the area or nation in which they live. This sort of purpose is often spoken of as vision. Then, of course, there is a large body of believers who see God's purpose as getting many saved (i.e., the great commission), witnessing to the nations (i.e., the gospel of the kingdom), and bringing in a great harvest to the glory of God (i.e., revival, latter rain). Then there are those who see God's purpose as entirely wrapped up in Christ and His church. We were exposed to this teaching for many years, so we know something about it, which is quite good as far as it goes. And finally, there are those that seem to see God's purpose as entirely about saving some people so they can go to heaven and condemning the multitudes so they can go to man's version of an eternal torture chamber called *hell*. To be clear, of all the above, this one I disagree with the most.

Obviously, this catalogue of how the Lord's people view God's purpose is incomplete and does not present the full scope of each one listed. Nevertheless, it serves to make the point that there are many views.

Please understand that I am not critical of these many views, except perhaps the heaven-hell one. Much of this, and undoubtedly more, is good and right and has purpose in the building up of the body of Christ in love and in reaching the nations with the good news of Jesus Christ. In no way do I put these things down as unimportant, for most assuredly they are important, even vital, in the work of God, and much (but, perhaps not all) of it is the Lord's doing.

However, it seems to be in our human nature to attach ourselves to something of God and hold to it as if it were the most important, if not the only, thing that God is interested in. Perhaps this is by the design of God to ensure that His people remain glued to what He has called them to do in order for Him to accomplish His purpose and plan. After all, He sees the entire grand scheme of things, for He is the Great Creator and Architect of all; whereas, we, typically, like worker bees, only see things from a limited sphere. We need the eyes of our hearts opened to see as our God sees.

But does God's purpose end with these things, or are they leading to something that is much grander than any single purpose or vision, even greater than the gospel of the kingdom going forth, reaping a great harvest, or even Christ and His church? Another way of asking the question is this: Are all these

things leading to a grand climax that answers to the very heart of God? Or yet another way of asking it is this: Are all the individual parts (i.e., purposes, visions, destinies) part of a much greater purpose of God?

The answer to each of these questions is an unequivocal yes. However, perhaps it is best to see this myriad of things as part of God's plan to achieve His purpose. In other words, they are not His purpose, but rather, they are within His plan to bring about what He has purposed to do in His creation. They are part of God's grand plan, and they are all leading to the grand climax that God has purposed in, through, and by His Son. They are not means to their own ends but means to bring about God's purpose, whether they are small things or big things. Nothing that God has put in motion is by coincidence or will be lost, even if it seems small in comparison to His ultimate goal.

Now, in the Greek, the word *purpose* is translated from the word *prothesis*, which means "before-placing," and the word *protithemi*, which means "before-place." The thought conveyed is of a goal set before the mind. In other words, a purpose or goal is established before something is done or planned. These words are respectively found in Matthew 12.4; Mark 2.26; Luke 6.4; Acts 11.23; 27.13; Romans 8.28; 9.11; Ephesians 3.11; 2 Timothy 1.9; 3.10; Hebrews 9.2 [*prothesis*], and in Romans 1.13; 3.25; Ephesians 1.9 [*protithemi*]. Interestingly, the references in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Hebrews literally apply to the cake of bread in the Holy Place, the showbread, which points to Christ. This is a great topic in itself. See issue #02-08112, *The Bread Of The Presence*.

Once a goal is set before the mind, a plan must be established to bring about the goal. A purpose without a plan merely remains in the mind, but a purpose with a plan goes beyond the mind into the realm of action. Another way of stating this is that a purpose is the endpoint of that which has been in view since the inception of a plan. When all is said and done, the purpose remains, for this is what the originator had in mind to bring about. A plan is simply all the details that have to be put into play and worked out to reach the goal or purpose. Once the purpose is achieved, we could say that the plan is history, while the purpose remains.

Generally speaking, a purpose is very simple or straightforward, while a plan is much more involved, with many facets. God's purpose and plan follow the same course. The fact of the matter is that many believers down through the centuries, including many in our day, have gotten caught up in debating about and dividing over the details of God's plan and have lost sight of God's purpose.

So, what is God's ultimate purpose? The answer is discovered in the word **all**, and it is given to us by Paul, the apostle who was given revelation of the mystery of God.

Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all. (1 Corinthians 15.28 CV)

God's purpose is to be *All in all* in His entire creation.

The Greek word for *all* is *panta*, which means "all, any, every, the whole." In other words, when *panta* appears in the Greek and is translated as the word *all*, it is a very comprehensive word that encompasses the whole or everything. Nothing is left out with the meaning of *all*. It is not all with exceptions, omissions, or deletions.

Obviously, the expression **All in all** is comprised of two *alls*, which in itself makes this expression very comprehensive.

The second *all* refers to the whole or to everything, which has to refer to all that God has created through His Son (Colossians 1.16), both the visible and the invisible. Simply, the *all* is the whole of God's creation.

The first *all* refers to God the Father in relation to all or to the whole. He is to become **All**; that is, He is to fill **everything** in the whole of creation with His life. God is love; He is light; He is spirit. His purpose is to bring all creation into His love, light, and spirit.