

THE WAY TO FULFILL GOD'S PURPOSE

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; John 1:4; 6:35, 57; 4:14, 24; 6:63

GOD'S PURPOSE

God's economy and God's building both depend on the tree of life. In Genesis 1 there is a full record of God's creation. On the sixth day God created a man in His own image and then committed man with His own authority (v. 26). *Image* means "expression." Something in your image is the expression of yourself. God created man in His own image for the purpose of having man as His very expression in this universe and on this earth. God is hidden and invisible, yet God has a heart's desire to express Himself through man. God did not create a thousand men at one time, but He created just one man. All the descendants of that one man were included in that one man. God created a corporate man in His image to express Himself, so man is the very image, the very expression, of God.

Why did God also commit man with His authority? God's purpose is to express Himself, but this purpose of God was greatly frustrated by His enemy. God has an enemy in this universe and on this earth, and this earth has been usurped from the hand of God, robbed away from God. Thus, God had to create a man to deal with His enemy. It is for this purpose that God committed His authority to man, that man may be not only His expression but also His representative, representing Him on this earth as the very authority to deal with His enemy.

God gave authority to Adam for the purpose that he might rule over the earth, and especially that he might rule "over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (v. 26). The implication here is that God's enemy is embodied in the creeping things. In Genesis 3 the head of the creeping things came in, that is, the serpent, the enemy of God. The serpent in Genesis 3 and the scorpions in Luke 10, representing the sinful and unclean evil spirits, are creeping things. God committed His authority to man that man might have not only the power but also the authority to rule the whole earth and to subdue it. That meant that the earth had been in rebellion and that the rebellious earth had to be subdued. Throughout the sixty-six books of the Bible, there are always these two aspects. God's intention positively is to express Himself through a corporate man, and negatively to deal with His enemy, Satan, through this corporate man. At the end of the Scriptures there is a city called the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2). God's image is expressed through that city (v. 11; 4:3), and God's authority is exercised through that city (22:5; 21:24-26). That city is the very expression and representation of God.

EATING OF THE TREE OF LIFE

In Genesis 1 there is the purpose, the intention, of God, but there is not the way to fulfill God's purpose, the way to attain God's intention. The way is not in Genesis 1 but in Genesis 2, and what is the way? The way is the tree of life (v. 9). After the revelation of the words *image* and *dominion (authority)*, there is the word *life* in Genesis 2. How could we created human beings express God if we did not have the life of God? You can take a picture of me, but that picture only has a certain image without life. If God is life within you and lives in you, it is possible for you to live God out, to express God in a full way. The way to fulfill God's purpose is seen in the tree of life. Even the matter of authority to represent God depends on the tree of life. If you do not have the tree of life, God within you as your life, how can you exercise His authority? For these two aspects of God's purpose, God's expression and God's representation, we need God to be life to us. We need God to live within us that we may be His very expression and His very representation.

Throughout world history there have been many religions with many natural concepts. With nearly all the religions there is the same one thought that God is the Creator and that we are the creatures. As the Creator, God is so great, so high, and so far away from us, and we are so little, so low. We have to humble ourselves and even to prostrate ourselves to worship this Creator God. I would not say that this is wrong, but I would ask you

to consider what God asked man to do after He had created him. After God created man, He did not say, "Adam, you have to realize you are a little creature, and I am your great Creator. I am always on the throne, and you always have to prostrate yourself to worship Me." There is not such a record in Genesis.

Genesis tells us that after God created man, He put man in front of the tree of life. God did not give man a list of commandments. That was the work of Moses after the fall, not the work of God according to His eternal intention. The law is in Exodus 20, not in Genesis 2. In Genesis 2 is the first picture regarding God's dealing with His created man. There is such a basic principle of the first mentioning in the Bible. Whenever you have the first mentioning, a principle is always laid. The first mentioning of God's dealing with man is that God put Adam in front of the tree of life, charging him to be careful about his eating (vv. 16-17). God's intention for man is not a matter of doing but a matter of eating. If man eats well and eats rightly, then he will be right.

This tree of life is God in Christ as the Spirit to be life to us. It is the Triune God, the Father in the Son, and the Son as the Spirit. Before we received the Lord, we may not have thought anything about God. But when we got saved or revived, we might have immediately made up our mind to serve the Lord, to do our best to do good deeds to please Him, and to "go to church" to worship Him. These thoughts, which are according to our natural concept, are wrong. God's intention is not that we serve Him, do good to please Him, or that we worship Him in a religious, ritualistic way. But God's intention is that we eat Him. We have to eat Him. The first picture of God's dealing with man is not a picture of doing but a picture of eating.

God presented Himself to man in the form of food. This can be clearly seen in the Gospel of John. John tells us that in the beginning was the Word, the Word was God, and in Him was life (1:1, 4). One day He performed a miracle by feeding five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish (6:9-13). Then the people wanted to make Him King. But He did not take that offer (v. 15). He later told them that He came not to be a king to rule others outwardly but to be the bread of life to be eaten (vv. 35, 57). He came that we may eat Him. The Lord does not want us to consider how to serve Him, how to worship Him, or how to glorify Him, but He wants us to consider Him as our food. He came to present Himself to us as life in the form of food. We have to take Him as food by feeding on Him and eating Him. "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (v. 57b).

We have to believe in the Lord Jesus because we need Him as our life (3:16, 36). To believe in Him is to receive Him into us as life (1:12-13). He is not only our objective Savior but also our subjective life. We need such a life. After receiving Him, the problem with us is not related to work, to service, or to worship, but to eating. How do you eat, what do you eat, and how much do you eat? Immediately after the creation of man, God put man in front of the tree of life that man may take the tree of life as his food. This simply means that God presented Himself to man as life in the form of food. God had no intention to ask man to do things for Him. God's intention is that man would simply take God Himself as his food, that man would feed on God.