

Purpose, Principles, and the Person: A Personal Testimony

by Devern Fromke

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's purpose and the person behind it, as revealed in the life of Abraham, and how it applies to our lives today.

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Scripture: Genesis 14:13, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his 60 years of ministry and shares a basic lesson on God's purpose as depicted in the book of Genesis. He emphasizes that God not only has a purpose in everything He does, but there are also principles that govern and bring that purpose into being. The speaker acknowledges that obstacles and unexpected challenges may arise along the way, but it is important to trust in God's plan and not rely on natural reasoning. He also highlights the importance of being purpose-centered and understanding the principles that guide the fulfillment of God's purposes.

Transcript

What a privilege to be with you again after many years. I forgave you for your mistake. I really thought you were perfect until that happened.

I have always prepared much for a series of ministry. That has not been quite the case this time because I could not settle on what the Lord wanted me to share. I knew the purpose or the theme of the conference.

That has been one of my themes for years. But I could not settle, could not come to rest on what I should share. The last couple of days as we have been with brothers and fellowshiping, it seemed like the Lord indicated that I should share my testimony with you.

I have always hesitated because I believe we do not preach ourselves but Christ. And yet I remember how often Paul brought his personal experience into all that he shared. So I am going to, this afternoon, give you a lesson that dates back 40 years.

We shared it in many, many places in the early years of our ministry. And that was true when we came the first time to Richmond. Just a little background.

I would not share this except that our brother last night alluded to it. The Lord said, go ahead. The first time we came, we were meeting in the Miller's Garage.

Anybody in those days meeting in the Miller's Garage? There were very few. But it was a very wonderful and precious time of fellowship. I enjoyed especially the ladies that God had been gathering together, their prayer and their burden.

When we finished, I believe it was Llewellyn said, we really need to have a church, a living expression of the Lord here. And I looked around and saw mostly ladies and a few kids, younger brothers. No mentioning of names.

And I said, Lord, if you would gather some brothers together, some older men, you could build a church here. She called me back a year later, I think it was. Did we go to Roslyn that year? That's the first years at Roslyn.

Dates back 30 years. I bring you up to date because some of you don't know the very beginnings. But I remember as I left that first time, I think it was Ray and some of the ladies said, who else could share something along the line of God's purpose and all that this involves? And I said, well, there's another brother who could do much better than I am.

Why don't you call Stephen Conn? And God has brought much through our brother. And so here we are this afternoon. What I want to share with you now is a basic lesson that goes back.

I want to share it because there are young people, there are folk here who probably can be helped. The reason I put it this way is because once it was a message and a teaching lesson, now it has become my experience. And it's my testimony of what God has done through these years.

I'd like for you to turn this afternoon to the book of Genesis. The other three brothers are going to be speaking from the New Testament. And I feel that this gives us in the book of Genesis the Old Testament picture of what God was doing so far as purpose is concerned.

Chapter 12 of the book of Genesis. Once again, we call upon the Lord. Father, what a privilege this afternoon to open your word and to claim that the Holy Spirit will make application to our hearts.

We're confident that we're gathered to that end. We believe you to do it in Jesus name. Amen.

I have realized through the years that God not only has purpose in view in everything that he does, but there are principles that govern and bring the purpose into being. Thank you. There is much being said today in the line of purpose.

Some of the recent books, one of them speaks of being purpose driven. And I mention that because I want to speak of purpose in a little different sense. I believe that when God works out purpose, it's a fulfilling thing.

That only he can accomplish. In our power driven stage today, people want meaning and value and purpose. And everybody is speaking of it.

And there are some churches that are very large. The theme that's very real to them is purpose driven. Books have been written.

But I have come through these years to discover now, as God has crowded me back and this trust will unfold this afternoon and maybe tomorrow, that there is a person behind all of it. And I like to say that this universe is person centered. You who don't read tongues will have to learn to.

Person centered. And it is principles governed. Principles governed.

But it is purpose fulfilling. And I would like this afternoon to share with you some governing principles that God has brought into my own life. And as I see them operating in the life of Abraham, we're going to realize how God fulfills, sovereignly works to fulfill his purpose in Abraham.

Let's begin reading, shall we, in Genesis chapter 12. The Lord had said to Abram, Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land. I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation. And I will bless you. And I will make your name great.

And you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. And whoever curses you, I will curse.

And all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. I am personally convinced that God who is the great blesser is looking for lives through whom he can pour himself and bless that we might be a blessing. So Abram left as the Lord had told him.

Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Heron. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated.

And the people that they had acquired in Heron. And they set out for the land of Canaan. And they arrived there.

Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Mar in Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared.

The Lord appeared. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring, I will give this land. So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.

From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel, pitched his tent. With Bethel on the west, Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev. I don't know about you, but through the years I have always loved the way God hides meaning in certain words. It's the glory of God to hide.

It's God's way of hiding things. Man searches out only when God reveals. Very early, because my heart was fixed to fulfill the purpose of God, I need to say I have had two fathers, physical father, very wonderful, godly man.

But I had a spiritual father from the age of 14 on. He nurtured and was very careful in pointing certain things to me. He always was saying purpose above all else.

I remember he would look at a chair, for example, and say, what's the most important thing about the chair? And I'd ponder and I'd say, well, the fact that it's soft. That's for the benefit of some of you. For to our speakers.

The fact that it's soft. No. The fact that it's metal.

The fact. No. The most important thing about anything is its purpose.

From 14 years on, that was drilled into my thinking purpose above all else. All I knew was that God had a purpose for me. Of course, being very centered in myself, I related everything to God's purpose for me.

And so when I thought a purpose, it was God's purpose for me. As many years, some years at least, before he began to enlarge my vision, I began to see that God had a purpose for himself in himself. As it was alluded to this morning, that purpose in himself is an all governing thing, but it comes out of who God chiefly is.

This whole picture of who determines how and what he is eventually going to accomplish. What would please God? The who that we need to get acquainted with. I believe that this is why Paul starts out by saying, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians starts, the God and father. So it became very wonderful to me to realize that while God is creator, he's the ruler, he's the provider, the protector. There are many characters, qualities, things that God in his person, he is first and foremost, above all else, he's a father.

What would a father want? What would satisfy a father? If he's primarily a creator, he could be satisfied with the new heavens, the new earth and all that he could make. If he's a ruler, he could be satisfied with one great universe fully under his control and will. But if God of before and above and beyond all else is a father, the thing that will satisfy a father heart.

Paul goes on to speak of it in Ephesians, the family in heaven. And that's why my eyes began to be open to the fact that in Abraham, God gives us a picture, an earthly pattern. First 11 chapters of Genesis, Adam, Noah, both fathers.

But now he selects a man who is going to be the beginning of a new, new humanity, a whole new thing that God's going to reveal. And so Abraham becomes a pattern man. That's why we're turning to him this afternoon as a father.

I believe that Abraham one day will have a vast family that will number the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore. That's the picture that God gives us through Abraham. Well, as we move on to look into the life of Abraham and the way that God is going to fulfill that purpose, there are some governing principles.

I think I look back over 60 years in ministry. Started when I was 18. Sixty years.

And I believe there are at least three seasons that I have gone through. My first season, I was purpose centered. Very obviously, everything I saw was related either to me or to God's purpose.

That'll unfold. But I was purpose centered. And I thank God for that season.

But there came a time when I began to realize that the purposes that God was going to work out had to be accomplished through certain ways. As I've said this morning, certain principles that govern how this is going to be done. If you are purpose driven, the goal is to fulfill some purpose or objective.

Almost any methods or means will begin to do it. I could give you religious groups today who are ruthless because the goal is all important. Any means is necessary to justify it.

We know that while purpose being purpose centered is not exactly right. I went through another season in which I was principle centered. The whole of my outlook and everything was finding the ways, knowing how God was going to do it.

And I thank God because principles are very important and significant. But the last 10 years, God has been crowding me back to the one who designed and governed all principles and has planned the purpose. That's sort of broad stroke shadows.

It'll come out as we go along. But I want to talk to you this afternoon about some governing principles. Here we see one, first of all, in the life of Abram.

This is a wonderful insight. When I saw one day God was saying Abraham brought to a certain place was building an altar. In this Old Testament setting, the altar is responding to the one who is worthy because worship is discovering worthiness.

God spoke to Abram and he saw the worthiness and he begins to give himself. And so Abraham gives the whole burnt offering. He gives himself.

Many people don't realize that from Adam to Moses, it was the burnt offering, the whole burnt offering. It was only after Moses came on the scene that we had all the other offerings. And the whole religious world is primarily involved in these other offerings today.

But when God deals, first of all, with Abram, he gives himself totally to God. So we have a picture of this man whom God has laid hold of. And it's interesting how God hides the fact that he puts an altar, he builds an altar between Bethel and Ai.

Now, all of you know that Bethel means in the house of God. But when I discovered what Ai meant, it was a real unveiling to me. It means actually a heap of ruins.

And then it was as though the Lord personally gave me a reign and said, When you finish the course of your life, you will either have built with me a house of God, or in all your work, you will just have a heap of stones, a heap of ruins. And I saw in my mind's eye a lovely house, you know, with all its stones. Everybody fit in their place.

Then I saw this heap of stones over here. And suddenly he said, these could be born again stones. These could be living stones.

These could be my children. But they've never been built into a house. And it's like a thundering thing to my own heart is that, oh God, you put Abraham in this place in between Bethel and Ai.

He built his altar. And it's as though the Lord was saying, because Ai was on the east, when the sun would awaken in the morning, he'd look up and say God's word to him, don't let your life end with a heap of ruins. But by the time the sun would make its turn to the west, he could look back and say, thank God, I've lived for Bethel.

Now, it may not be meaningful to you. May I preach this a long time before I began to realize that this purpose that's being fulfilled through Abraham as the father, the faithful, one day he will have, because he's a father, a vast family, that house which represents his purpose being fulfilled. And I have bowed again and again as I've looked back upon these years and said, oh God, don't let me come to the end of

life.

Maybe successful in the eyes of people, but have nothing but a heap of ruins because I haven't been building with you. I thank God that while that was 40 years ago, I look down through these years now and realize again and again, he keeps coming back and saying, are you building with me or building something else? Well, then I began to make another discovery. Not only does God give us the picture of Abraham either fulfilling God's purpose or ending up with a heap of ruins, but he gave me the picture of the altar and the tent.

The altar represents our total dedication, our giving ourselves wholly to him. It's interesting, you don't find when God's dealing with Abraham, he's speaking of sins and all these things. The critical issue in Abraham's life was would he give himself to the one who was worthy? All these other things are inclusive.

They're taken care of in the whole burnt offering. I used to wonder about the Apostle Paul. See, Paul is the New Testament pattern of which Abraham is the Old Testament.

And I saw in Paul the fact that that day in Damascus wrote, Paul isn't starting to talk about the sins of things he has done. First word is, who art thou, Lord? Who art thou? This voice that's come, who art thou, Lord? When he discovers I am Jesus, he said, Lord, what will thou have me to do? All these things that we've done, sins and so that's all inclusive. When one comes to the whole burnt offering, they're giving themselves totally to him.

So the altar represents this dedication and the tent represents where you live or the dwelling to make it possible. Paul, I wish I could spend an hour on the tent and the altar. I've been through so many situations where I see individuals getting the tent and the altar confused.

A young couple came and said, we have found the most delightful place. It's about 150 years old. We're going to take every piece down and sand it and get it all fixed.

And my father heart looked at them and I said, if you're not careful, that tent will become your altar. And I watched them for seven or eight years strip and take care, you know, a lovely place. Nothing wrong with the house, except that the tent became their altar.

The day they finally came and said, why didn't we listen? We wasted all these hundreds of hours and put our family through all this mess while we've been fixing up the tent. And now we're going to sell it. Do you know anybody like that? Well, it is very easy to confuse the tent and the altar.

I find every now and then some church group who allow their tent to become their altar. Nothing wrong with an adequate place to meet. Thank God.

I believe, as Vasileios Slink has said, when God builds the body right, he'll put the skin around it. But he'll do it. So I'm pleading with us this afternoon to recognize that the altar has its place.

It's the dedication to fulfill the thrust, the purpose, the thing that God wants. And the tent goes along with it. I think my wife would have said, yeah, it's been pretty breezy sometimes, Vern.

But she never complained. I must move on. So we have the altar and the tent.

And every one of us has a basic altar this afternoon. It's interesting how these altars were built through the Old Testament. Stones that had never been hewn, supposed to represent something old and rugged like

the cross.

The prophet one day, in the midst of great dissension in Israel, put up 12 stones saying, not 10 and 2, but 12. I don't want to get into all that. The altar of our life is showing.

Thank God I'm on your lady's side this afternoon. The tent's all right, ladies. You're the homemaker.

God wants you to have, I believe, a lovely tent that expresses yourself and the glory of God. But don't let your tent become your altar. Anyway, let's read, shall we? Are you still with me? So, Abram now has finally gone into the land where God has promised him.

And we read in verse 10. Now there was a famine in the land. And Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarah, I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, this is his wife. Then they will kill me, but will let you live.

Well, we don't need to go into all that. I want you to get another principle now that's involved here. Do you know that as surely as your face is set, your altar is built, your focus to fulfill purpose, you are going to face what I call some expectation refocusing.

It's either shattering or refocusing. What do you mean? I can hear Abram saying, God, so glad you called me out of Ur, out of all that was involved there. I'm so glad you brought me into this wonderful place.

But I just got here, and now there's a terrible famine. And all the reasonings of our heart rise up. God, this thing you're going to fulfill, this purpose you're going to work out, and now I'm in the midst of a famine.

I just have to be open and honest with you. Just as surely as the focus of your life is to fulfill purpose, you're going to run to obstacles. You're going to run into these things that, God, I didn't expect this famine.

And we go back into natural reasonings to figure out how we can get out of this. You know the story. If I were really honest with you this afternoon, I'd have to say to you, these expectations shatter, these things that have come.

If I look back over 40 years, even longer, and realize, oh God, I didn't expect this. I thought you were going to help me, and now you're hindering me. Wasn't long.

We've had revival that swept through an area. God had been working on the West Coast in a conference in May. Never forget, Monday as we closed the conference, about 15 of us stood in a circle, praying and committing ourselves to the Lord, missionaries and servants, as we went out from that place in Yakima.

Twenty minutes later, on the four-lane highway, my car was hit by a drunken driver, making getaway with a stolen car. I awakened five days later in the hospital. I don't want to go into the details of it.

Just simply to say, there came a sudden adjustment. All my expectations, God was working, God was blessing, every place I went. And now, the enemy came and whispered, God isn't so good, is he? Except that I've known a principle through the years, and it is this.

Oswald Chambers says, the root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good. You ought to write that someplace in your Bible. The root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good.

Well, you know, you get back and say, well, I know, Lord, there's the goodness and severity, but your severity is really pretty. The enemy, enemy sifts in all of this. And I'm ashamed to tell you, in the last 30, 40 years, how many times, almost offended, almost offended.

Now, of course, I know enough theology, and I know all that, you know, God's good. But to be quite honest with you, my mind would say, I'm not offended, but my spirits pouted. Anybody else had a pouting spell besides me? And folk can tell very quickly when you've got all the vocabulary that's right, but you've got a pouting spirit.

And I got the place where I said, OK, God, this is your purpose. You're going to fulfill it. Go ahead.

I'll watch you pouting. Not easy to tell you. I'm ashamed of it.

But I have to be honest, because I somehow think that probably nobody goes beyond this. You get into the land and it's famine. How many ever hit a famine after you really thought you're on the way for God? You went down to Egypt, back to the world.

You left your altar. Well, when you read the story here, you will see the foolishness. And, of course, Abraham is a very fragile vessel.

He's concerned about his life. If you know what he does, he tells a half lie. It's usually what they are.

We never tell a blatant lie. They're always half. Sarah was his sister, as well as his wife.

Are you following? We have such a way of convincing us. Anyway, let's read on. Not getting very far this afternoon, but here we are.

Let's pick it up. In chapter 13, we read. So Abraham finally comes back to the land.

Shattered expectations. The famine. Now it's time to come back.

In verse chapter 13. So Abraham went up from Egypt to the Negev with his wife and everything he had. And Lot went with him.

Abraham had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. From the Negev, he went from place to place until he came to Bethel. To the place between Bethel and Ai, where his tent had been earlier.

And where he had first built an altar. There Abraham called on the name of the Lord. It's very wonderful that when God deals with us and gets our eyes open again and we quit our little pouting time and we are ready to come back.

He brings Abraham back into the land. Back to the altar. The place between Ai and Bethel.

You study that in your own and consider what's really involved. But there's another governing principle here that's going to make possible Abraham fulfilling. Do we need to make some change? I didn't hear you.

Is that better? Thank you. Always adjustment. Life is full of it, folks.

If you haven't discovered already, you will. Lots of adjustment. But God.

So, we have the purpose as represented between the place, the altar. Shattered expectations. Having to go down to Egypt or at least leaving.

I do not believe Abraham needed to go down to Egypt. I think if he had looked up and said, God, you brought me here to this place. And this famine, that's your problem, not mine.

And I'm not going to move because you have brought me here and I'm expecting you to provide wherever I am. Can you say amen to that? God, I refuse to get into my natural reasoning to try to figure out how we're going to help. Anyway, here is the refocusing of the expectations because we all expect it's going to be easy.

And all the way we discover there are obstacles. Now we come to another obstacle situation. You remember when Abraham came, he brought his nephew Lot along with him for company, I expect.

And it wasn't long before they got into the land and discovered because each Abraham's Lot and Lot had great numbers of herds, flocks. The land is not able to bear them together. So, we have a wonderful principle that comes now.

We read it in chapter 13, verse 5. Now, Lot, who was moving about with Abraham, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together. For their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together.

And quarreling arose between Abraham's herdmen and the herdmen of Lot. The Canaanites and the Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So, Abraham said to Lot, let us have no quarrel between you and me or between your herdsmen and mine.

For we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Let's separate. It's part company.

If you go to the left, I'll go to the right. If you go to the right, I'll go to the left. Lovely spirit in Abraham.

Willing to let Lot make the choice of what would be best. And I think Lot looked over all the fertile grassland. Here he saw what was best for him.

He chose. We read on. Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered.

Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt towards Zor. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east.

The two men parted company. Abraham lived in the land of Canaan while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward and near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked, were sinning greatly against the Lord.

We get a principle here. And I feel that it's all governing in the life of any individual who's really going to press on with God to fullness of purpose. We've heard many messages on this thing we call the separating work of God.

Separation is a very wonderful thing because God separates Abraham first out of Caldea. Separation from the world. But he separates him unto himself.

You see, God's separation always has two aspects. The from and the unto. Separated from the world unto himself.

Abraham and his father go to a place called Haran and stay there many years. And while he's there, his father dies. I thought it was very interesting to discover that the name Haran means halfway.

He left the world, went halfway to Canaan, and he stayed there for many years. But it was necessary in some ways because his father could not move on into the full inheritance. And since then, all but his father's name was Delay.

Halfway and had to delay. I don't know. Maybe it doesn't say anything to you, but I've seen lots of people go halfway and delay.

Anybody else? Haran? Halfway? Delay? Well, you can picture it anyway. Anyway, he had not only to be removed from the world unto God, but from Kindred in order that he might get into the land. And now we're going to see another separation in the life of Abram.

From Anantu, this time his nephew Lot. And I think Lot represents another whole picture of individuals that sometimes is very difficult for us to recognize. Lot, just Lot it speaks of.

And yet Lot's never had a circumcised. He's never had a real dealing in his life. He's looking out for Lot all the time.

That's why he chose the best. Lot represents believers with a limited or narrow vision. This separation is very difficult.

It's a separation from various things. This time is Lot is separated from him. The moment Lot and Abram separate, God lifts him up and he says, now, look, we'll read it in a moment.

Look, north, east, south, west, all four directions. It would seem as though Abram had given the best away. You can't ever give anything away.

God just lifts you to a higher view and he says, I want you to see all I'm giving you. North, east, south, west, all four directions. His focus was for the purpose and the thing that God wanted.

So Lot represents another separation. Now, we need to be very careful at this point, because I believe that the scripture has many pictures of separation, but never division. Almost 30 years ago, when I first saw this little picture, division, it was as though the Lord said, remember Abraham's magnanimous spirit.

Lot, you choose whatever you want. Lot does. He moves away.

He pitches his tent toward Sodom. He didn't move there immediately, just toward, but little by little, he finally ended up in Sodom. And, you know, he was no doubt a capable, a just man.

And even Sodom was so hard up for good men. They made him one of the elders at the gate. The world's pretty hard up, but be careful the position the world gives you.

And it's interesting that when you set your heart on what everybody else wants, the world's going to crowd for the same thing. There were kings in this whole area who looked upon this wonderful land that Lot had moved into and they swept in. You can read the story.

They swept in and in the process of it, the battles, Lot and his family were taken captive. You read that one of Lot's friends, captives, slipped away and came to Uncle Abraham and says, you know what's happened to Lot? He's been taken captive. Now you get an opportunity for Abraham's spirit.

I think I could have said, yeah. He made a bad choice. Teach him a lesson, Lord.

Anybody else? I mean, a real good lesson, Lord. He'll never do it again. But that's not Abraham.

His spirit, his spirit. There may have been separation, but not division. I kind of feel like he said, Lot, I think you're going to need me down the road.

Let me give you my phone number when you can call. Just when some difficulty comes, I'll be there. Anyway, word got back to Abraham.

And what does he do? He arms his own household. And he goes out against these mighty kings of the valley. And because God is with him, he wins over these kings.

Because it had to be God. But God has something of purpose he's going to fulfill. I am so glad that when God is involved in something, little or small, that's not the issue.

God is going to make a way through. And he did. And so we read the story of how Lot was taken captive.

And now Abraham goes out and he rescues him. And we pick it up, reading in chapter 14, beginning with verse 13. Oh, let's pick up verse 12.

Those who, verse 13. One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre, the Amorite, a brother of Esau and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram.

When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. During the night, Abram divided his men to attack them. And he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.

He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions together with the women and the other people. And Abraham returning to return from defeating Kedor and the kings allied with him and so forth. Then you read down in verse 21.

He meets the king of Sodom where the battle had been taking place. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, verse 21, the king of Sodom said, Abram, give me the people and keep the goods for yourself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand to the Lord God, most high creator of heaven and earth, and have taken the oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread of the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say I have made Abram rich.

I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me to Esau, Esau and Mamre. Let them have their share. When I saw this began gradually to unfold, I realized here was another governing principle in the life of Abram and would have to be in any life who's going to fulfill purpose, not only expectations refocus, separations that come and not division, because Abram spirit remained right, even though a lot had left.

He's willing to go down. But now we come to this. I think it will make it the last of our principles, this principle of surrendering or yielding my rights, yielding my rights.

Look at it for a moment. Abram had won the battle. There's always the plunder, the rights that come to the one who wins the battle.

And Abram had won the battle and he had a right to take the booty, the plunder from having won the battle. In fact, the king comes and said, you can take all the booty from the battle. All I want is my own people.

It's a right that he could take. And yet Abram looks at the king and he says, I've gotten a covenant agreement, got something dealing with God. I will never make myself rich.

I will not take my rights. Lest anyone would ever say I have made Abram rich. I'd like to go on for a long time in this because I do believe that God's in the blessing business.

He wants to bless to make us not objects alone, but to be channels of blessing that there might be a flow through our life. And I don't fit into the modern prosperity message, but I can't help it if God blesses. I mean, if you don't seek for yourself, if you refuse to claim your rights, you yield up and say, God, if there's any way in which you're going to pour through my life, that's your job, that's your business.

And there's a lot of little principle that I hadn't seen for a long time until I discovered that Abraham gives up his own rights, but not the rights of Enoch, Ezekiel and Mamre. Here were these three herdsmen with their man. They went out.

They had certain rights. And so he says, I will not accept my rights, but let them have their rights. And I saw in this what so often takes place in a family when father comes and says, I think the whole family will fast today.

And a wise mother will probably look at father and say, it's OK for you, Abe. But Sarah says the children are going to give up our own rights. You can't give them up for us.

Are you there? This is a peculiar picture of consecration. I've tried to crowd people so often into, you know, I give up and you're going to be included. I remember the first time my wife who understood this said, you can give it up, but son and I will do it on our own timing.

Consecration is an individual issue. I'd like to do it for a lot of people, but each one gets to give up their own rights. You can say amen to that.

Thank you, Lord. You are the one who allows us to yield up, to give our own rights. Well, simply saying in all of this now that when God is moving in a life and he's going to bring about purposes and fulfill them, somehow I feel like if my eyes are really, truly fixed, not just on purpose, but back on the person who governs the one who made all the principles get into tomorrow.

Let me just say this afternoon, it's very interesting how every principle in scripture has what we call the right hand and the left hand side. Always two aspects. We separate sometimes just to weigh that over.

For example, the right hand principle of initiative. God takes the initiative. God is sovereign.

God's going to work out his purposes. But at the same time, God wants man to respond. And he waits for our response.

These two are always wings of the same bird. Their principle, they're the right and the left hand issues that are always involved. I look back all through these years and discover how many times people get ahold of either the right or the left, as though that were all.

No, they both fit together. Years ago, when I began to make this discovery, the fact that every place I go in central Indiana, among our fellowships, the elders were hung up. Invariably, some things I'd fellowship with them a little bit.

And some of the brothers would say, we've got a principle. And they give me a real good, solid principle. It was true.

It was right. And I'd listen. The others say, but here's a principle, too.

And I listen. They were right. One had the right.

The other had one had the right hand. The other the left hand. One had the initiative.

The other had the response. All of life, so far as the principles of God, always have the two sides. You'll read in the new book a visit I made to Albuquerque, New Mexico, many years ago.

Lovely Bible church. They just built a new building. Hadn't been there three or four days, and I discovered that the elders, the leaders, were in a stalemate.

To put it in a simple way, here was one group who said, we've got this lovely new building. We need to have more outreach, more evangelism to fill it. The other group in the church were saying, oh, we need to really establish the ones we have so that the new ones don't come in and be just like them.

They need to have real change, deeper life brought in them. And as I listened, I realized that they brought me as a teacher to help establish and to deal the cross in the lives of these. But I looked at them and I thought, there's a real stalemate here because both are right.

So we called a Sunday afternoon meeting to pray and fellowship. Seven men sat on this side of the aisle. Seven men sat on this side of the aisle.

This side were the certain group who believe this, this side the group who believe this. As I was praying, I thought, Lord, how am I going to explain to them that they're both right and yet wrong in their spirit? And I remembered having read Watchman Me, where he talked about certain group who were catchers and others who were menders. I explained to them, you who are evangelistic, you who want outreach, are catchers.

Thank God for catchers. Absolutely necessary. And you over on this side who want to establish and bring them into maturity, you're the menders.

They all agreed. What do you do when you've got two groups in the church that are both right but can't get along? Well, that happens in every church, and I won't say that, but I've been around a little bit. The catchers and the menders, what do you do? That afternoon as we prayed took about two hours because the issue is always getting both groups to come before the Lord.

And I heard them begin to pray, God, what do you really want? I'm not going to push my agenda. I know I'm right, but God not going to push my side. What do you really want, Lord? What do you really want? Well, the Lord is faithful when he can get us separated from our own agenda and our own plans and our own ways.

Lord, what do you want? He whispered in the ears and I was trying to help them. The catchers and the menders, you know, it's just interesting how often you have in a church both those who are catchers and menders. I think sometimes catchers and menders marry because they need one another.

I married a catcher the first, when God brought need into my life. She was a going out kind of catcher always. It wasn't hard for her to talk to people.

But I'm the mending style. I don't ever catch many, but I can sure mend them. Are you following me? And that's true of a lot of churches.

They're very good in catching, but everything goes out the back door. They have a flow through. And then there's the menders who never catch anybody, but they keep them if they do get them.

What I'm trying to say this afternoon is when you really get down to the principles of God's working, both things, the right and the left, they're there. And the struggle we have is that we insist on our way. Well, that afternoon, never forget.

Finally, a couple hours, the men were saying, OK, God, what do you really want? What do you really want? One of the catchers stood and he said, since Brother Fronke is here, let's back him and go on with some mending. Let's establish those we have so that the new people who come in won't be just like the ones we need a real change. And I saw in that, I've seen it again and again, even in central Indiana these years, how many times we get in a stalemate.

My problem was for years I was principle centered. I just get the right principle. I can force it through.

I'd moved away from being purpose governed, purpose centered to become principle centered. But just as soon as you become principle centered, your whole life is centered in this is the way to do it. And you always have to press back to, oh, God, you are the one who made the principles.

You're the one who designed both catchers and menders. You're the one. One more illustration.

I'll close. A number of years ago, I was back in the Finger Lakes area in a summer conference. Three speakers, one of them by quite coincidence, turned out to be the president of a large Catholic university.

He knew he was a man who knew God. I don't know how he could stay where he was. But anyway, he knew God.

And I recognized it. And I was eager to get better acquainted. One afternoon there was no meeting.

He said, Vern, I've got my sailboat along. Let's go out for a little sailboating. I was eager to be with him because I sensed a man who was way beyond average.

As we were moving along, I was kind of priming myself. It seemed like he was someone you could give a picture to and he could quickly grasp it. So I turned to him and I said, in your university, you have all these colleges.

And I know how colleges are vying for their own positions. And I said, what do you do when you have two groups that are each right and they know they're right? The right or the left hand side? They're both right in principle. What do you do? And he smiled and said, I understand that perfectly.

He said, that's why they have a president and they come to me. I have to make the choice. The principle always goes back to some person.

And then he made the statement that I questioned he'd want publicized. But he said, you know, in the Catholic Church, we have these contingencies. We have all these struggles that go on.

Because all of life is built around two things, two principles that seem to be in collision. And there needs to be a choice. Usually it's a timing fact.

Anyway, he finally looked at me and he said, you know, that's the reason we have a pope warring factions and segments. Somebody needs to make a choice. And I smiled back and I said, well, I'm understanding what you're saying.

You caught it quickly. I'm sure glad I've got another pope, direct access to him. He's the one who makes the decision.

Is anybody understand what I'm trying to say this afternoon? All of life when we went through this last election in Florida was such a tangle. And I saw the secretary of state and all these one. They each came in with their they were right from their standpoint.

And, you know, it doesn't take any wisdom. I said, it's going to have to end up in the Supreme Court, not only in Florida, but the U.S. And it did. And then the Supreme Court, there was one who made the final choice.

What I'm leaving you with this afternoon is this. This universe is not principle centered or rather purpose centered. I also appreciate how Brother Kong was saying this morning that God's ways will fulfill his purpose.

When man attempts to bring it about in his own strength, it's purpose driven. We're not purpose driven. And for years I was principle centered, always trying to get a hold of principles.

Thank God I believe principles are important. They govern. But I know there's only one you can go to who understands the principles that he made.

And it's usually a matter of timing. That Catholic president that afternoon said, ever hear of first this, then this sequence, first this, then this. And that's satisfied because I've come to realize that the further along we go with the Lord, the more he crowds me back to himself.

You see, it's not in seeking wisdom or understanding, but it's in knowing him. And all God's approach to us is to crowd us back to constantly be centered, focused. Oh, God, I've tried all these things.

I'm wrecked on you. And I have to say to you this afternoon, as I look at the seasons of my life, thank God I was here for a long time. And I believe purposeful filling is the byproduct that's going to come when principles are properly governing.

But I still thank God these last 10 years. He shut me up in a new way until I've had to cry out again and again. Oh, God, only you know.

And I would just submit to each of you, brothers and sisters, this afternoon. Sooner or later, God gets all of us to that place where all of the wisdom and principles we have require his making the decision. Do I have an amen from anybody? So many things you can't understand.

No way you can understand them. I don't know what you're going through, but my plea this afternoon is don't be offended. Don't let your spirit get wrong.

Early this morning, as I was praying, I thought of even Paul and Barnabas, who teamed and worked together for such a moment of God's fulfilling. And then Paul said, can't take John Mark. He was washed out.

Barnabas wanted to. They separated. Now I'm going to make a statement might surprise you, but I believe Barnabas was more right than Paul.

But the good news is that God works his purpose around anyway. How many ever made a wrong decision? God said, I'm going to do it. I'm doing my purpose.

Because a little bit later on, John Mark is brought back. Any John Marks here who washed out beside me? There's good news. God loves to take those who are in weak moments.

And he says to you this afternoon, I'm going to work out my purpose. Even when Paul makes a mistake. I won't say that.

That's beside the point. The issue is we're looking back to who? God. Sooner or later, he crowds us to himself until all we can say, I'm wrecked on you.

You're all I have. But you're all I need. Father.

What I can't say this afternoon. I pray you will share. You will speak.

To my brothers and sisters. We want to be a people. Who are so occupied with your lovely self.

So totally engulfed in. Just centered on you. That you can speak to us.

Which principle? The timing. And we believe you will fulfill the purpose you have. Just as surely as Abram waits for that family that will number the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore.

Because he's a father. Like our Heavenly Father. We believe you're going to bring to birth.

You're going to accomplish. You're going to fulfill. The Bethel.

I thank you for this. So encourage some heart this afternoon. Don't let anyone leave.

Even yet with a pouting spirit. Some hidden bitterness. Bewilderment or questioning.

I've been so guilty of it so many times. But God is faithful. And I thank you.

Encourage hearts to believe. That John Mark can be a success for God. He can work around the blunders.

Some of his servants. Because he's the fulfilling God. We'll give you the praise.

The honor and the glory. For we ask it in Jesus name. And everybody said Amen.

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