

The Spiritual Purpose and It's Attainment

by John Follette

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and pursuing God's purpose in our lives to truly glorify Him.

Scripture: Psalm 40:7, Proverbs 29:18, John 4:34, John 11:4, John 11:43, John 17:4, Acts 16:7, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17, 1 Peter 4:11

Topics: "Spiritual Living", "Gods Will"

Description

John Follette emphasizes the importance of knowing the purpose and vision in our daily lives, cautioning against carrying over careless habits from the past that may hinder the manifestation of God in our new life. He highlights the need to align our actions with God's will and purpose, focusing on glorifying God in all that we do. Follette stresses the significance of spiritual living governed by divine principles and the restraint or constraint that a clear vision provides. He encourages surrendering to God's will, trusting Him to shape our lives into a divine pattern that reflects His glory.

Transcript

I like to know what I am doing and why. I must have design or purpose in what I do. This I have in the simplest matters of daily living. Some I know are not constructed so, and life to such is generally a series of accidents or unrelated circumstances; there seems to be no purpose aside from the physical existence and getting through.

Very often in the transfer from the old life and creation over to the new, we are still conscious of characteristics of the natural. They may form patterns for the new life to fall into. We need to be careful here. A careless habit of the old life may ruin the flow of life in the new order and hinder the fuller manifestation of God in our lives. Sometimes it may be desirable to carry a desirable trait or habit along. For instance, I have noticed people who in childhood and youth have been thoroughly disciplined. They have learned the value of obeying promptly and yielding quickly. When they come into the walk of the Spirit, this background is of great value and saves them many a difficult jolt.

In life I like to know (as far as possible in God's will) what I am doing and why. In this wonderful new life, God does not leave us in the dark and expect us to stumble along and get through the best we can. Life is more than being good and getting to heaven. I am sure He wants us spiritually minded in this matter of living. The Christian life is not a series of disjointed affairs or an ordeal or even a song through which we pass. There is a definite purpose for which we were each created.

This divine purpose is like a vision toward which we move. In our make-up according to God's creative touch, we are all made to follow a vision of some sort or pattern. All life and activity is due to motivation toward some desired end or purpose. That is how we are made and is basic in our constitution. This is seen in the most simple and prosaic doings of life. With some the whole purpose rests in the realm of the material, and life is governed and colored by it. Others have caught a vision of spiritual purposes and meaning to life and so are living (right now) for eternity.

If some of us did not have some perspective concerning prophecy and know something of God's plan in un-folding His general scheme, we might develop a bad case of jitters. None of us is saying, "What in the world is the matter?" We are able to trace His hand in the signs of the times and so to interpret the movements in the world. We are not worried thinking God has failed or Christ has failed.

Christians many times fail (and their faith is harmed) because they try so hard to accomplish things that God has no idea of doing. Instead of doing all sorts of good things (not wicked) but not in His will, they should find HIS will and walk in that. What a revelation to some hearts to find that after all the prayer, struggle, hard work and effort they fail to realize their purpose--all because it was their idea and plan and not God's! So in our Christian living if we do not have a spiritual, worthwhile purpose we shall make a great failure. "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Prov. 29:18). This verse is a great favorite with our missionaries. But I think it has a broader teaching than that usually given: that where there is no vision (no Christ or gospel) the people perish (or are lost).

It means that but much more. So we will let our dear Christian workers use it and get the vision of Christ to all they can. And you know I am a missionary in heart and would have gone to the field long ago only God had other plans for my life. In my college days I was a member of the Student Volunteer Movement and hoped to go. But God kept me home to train others to go. So now I go by proxy in the lives of many dear young men and women whom it has been my joy to train; and today they are serving in all different fields of the world.

Let us read not only the first part of this text, but the second part as well, He that keepeth the law, happy is he. I do not think the law here relates to the Ten Commandments. He is rather teaching us a principle of Christian living, and suggests the power of beholding or not beholding a vision and the law governing the same. After all, the law is cause and effect. Failure, loss, defeat, and tragedy are not just a happenstance--or accidental. There is always a cause back of it all--a law. So the text tells us: happy, or most fortunate, is one who discovers it and abides by it.

A more careful translation of the text from the original Hebrew will help us here--"Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint." How suggestive! Now we see why the loss is evident -- there has been a casting off of restraint. The vision has power to restrain or to constrain in your life. Many times it becomes positive in its con-straining ministry. Do you remember Paul in this position--"The love of Christ constraineth us"? And as to restraint: "The Spirit suffered them not" (Acts 16:7).

We do or refuse to do (in the matter of conduct) because of the power of the vision. Now we see more clearly the force of the verse. Where there is no vision (no restraining or constraining power in life), the people cast off restraint, and of course there is loss and failure. The objective and purposes have not been realized or attained. So there is loss, and life does not come to fruition. The design or pattern is not filled out. But most fortunate or happy is the one who discovers the law underneath the matter. Knowing this principle, he will order his steps accordingly.

Concerning the purpose or vision in Christian living, I Want to give you a few Scriptures. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. 3:17). "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever" (1 Peter 4:11).

From these texts we are able to see off in the distance a divine, supreme and spiritual purpose---the glory of God. In fact, the glory of God is the supreme purpose toward which the whole creation moves. Let us remember that God is a supreme Being. He is a dynamic, living personality. The first vocation of personality is expression, and this is a necessary characteristic of God. He continually desires to move out and express Himself. It is a fixed function of a living Being. Therefore God never hides Himself within the confines of His own nature.

This power to express and move out is found in the whole universe. It is found first in God's creative mood. The order of angelic beings, ministering spirits, moves to His glory. The whole celestial realm declares the glory of God. All His creative power and design in life move on to the glory of God. So when we read these texts touching upon His glory as the purpose in life, we see why even the commonplace, ordinary acts of life are blessed with great dignity and may bear a mark of distinction. Why? Just because He has so planned. Think again of motives in your living and service and be encouraged to know it is His glory that gives life dignity--and beauty, strength and godly character.

We must keep in mind that all spiritual living is, after all, not dependent upon certain blessings and emotional reactions, but the whole structure rests upon divine unchanging principles. These are fundamental and basic, giving stability to the structure whether it be an individual life or a Christian assembly or church. Thus the fact of spiritual law governing in the building or erection of this wonderful divine life must be duly recognized.

Were we as sincere and careful in the matter of spiritual purpose as we are about material ends, I am sure we should grow in grace and save ourselves many a spiritual headache. Why not study His Word and tarry long enough in His presence to find the purpose toward which He is working? Then we can trust Him to make the necessary adjustments in our spirit to help us in living to His glory. Were we once able to see this and brave enough to let God reduce our many activities and doings and what not, life would take on spiritual values and God would be glorified. I am sure it would not be according to the general design made by the human wisdom or even religious desires, but it would fall into a divine pattern, and His will and the glory of God would color even the most uneventful life.

Man's creation was unto the glory of God and He has not changed the original purpose. Now let us consider a little how this glory or purpose may be realized. How may such a lofty, idealistic scheme be made a reality? God has not left us in the dark here.

Many times we get confused and erect all sorts of natural or religious standards for living and measures for gauging our lives. Thus we become involved with details, technique, and side issues. We try to do so many things. We forget that all He wants of us is to do His will. Let Him shape the pattern as He sees good. It is His will which becomes the divine method. Every life should fall into a divine pattern governed by His will. That would not make all lives alike but a marvelous display of glory would be reflected in each life by each one's doing His will. His design for you may not be like mine, nor mine like my brother's. But all

will reflect His glory. Too many quarrel over their patterns and designs instead of surrendering quickly to His will, and growing into them, and thus really living. Accept life, don't quarrel with it! Offer it freely to Him and let Him focus your living to His glory; and live, just live. Folks are trying to do al-most anything else but live.

The divine method is doing His will. The doing of His will (great or small) always glorifies Him.

By way of illustration to show us a Scriptural picture of this teaching, let us look at the life of Christ. We know He kept the glory of God ever before Him, and spoke of it and related His life to it. It was the motto of His life. "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the ,book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy lag, is within My Heart" (Psalm 40:7, 8). So, long before He reaches Calvary we find Him as the ideal man doing God's will.

Again we find this truth revealed in the Old Testament offerings. You will remember the order of them. The first is not a sin offering. No, it is toward God, and is a picture of Christ (the ideal man) doing the will of God. No mention of blood, sin, or atonement. It is the will of God first. Isn't that beautiful? God first! Even Christ in life, as told in the meal offering, has God's will first. So Christ emphasizes the great necessity of doing God's will first. Run through the Gospels again and note this. John 4:34; Matt. 26:42.

Now let us turn to an incident in His life showing the other side of the question--the glory or the purpose side. You remember very well the story of Jesus' raising of Lazarus as given in John's Gospel. Many times we read purely from a traditional standpoint and so miss anything fresh and inspirational in the bit we read. We have a certain mental attitude or approach and knowing the story from so many readings, we anticipate the climax and are thus blessed or thrilled. I am trying to read the Gospels afresh (and not to anticipate too much), but rather keep open to the Spirit to lay emphasis or throw light on some of the least expected portions, and I am charmed to find the Word opening up like a beautiful flower.

I was reading this story and waiting to reach the thrilling climax--"Lazarus, come forth," but as I tarried the Spirit helped me to see so much even before I reached the usual point of victory. My heart and mind had been flooded for days with the thought of God's glory as the great purpose, and back in my mind was this atmosphere and condition. I was not directly conscious of it but I am sure God was.

How many of you who are familiar with this incident can recall Jesus' first words in relation to the situation? Let us review the story. The sisters are overwhelmed and are lamenting the fact of Jesus' absence. Lazarus is dead. Jesus is away--miles away, and on top of this distress He remains away two more days. What a very unhappy, depressing and tragic situation! How do they react? In the natural (note this, in the natural) they are so conscious of things seen that they are completely localized and seemingly have lost faith. They see Lazarus dead and in a tomb, and that sealed. They are tomb conscious, dead-man conscious, and are bound to the immediate and the death side of the situation. What are they thinking? "Oh, our dear Lazarus is dead, what shall we do ? Oh, if the Lord had only been here! If He only knew our situation!"

Oh, dear soul, have you a Lazarus dead and laid in a tomb? Has some precious hope died on your hands and so you have had to bury it? It became so very annoying that you had to. Some idea, plan, hope, dream, ambition has failed (in health) and died. It is even sealed in a tomb. Are you, too, saying, "Oh, if the Lord only knew!" Listen, my dear brother or sister, do not stay so near the tomb! You become tomb conscious, dead-man conscious, stone-over-the-tomb conscious and thus too local, too bound. You thus lose perspective of thought and vision. Do you not see how it affected the dear souls here?

What are the first words Jesus utters as He is fully aware of the whole situation--dead man, tomb, and the tragedy of broken hearts ? Listen, "When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Isn't that wonderful and beautiful? What is Jesus doing? He has faith, perspective of thought and vision, clear sight as to the purpose, and so relates the whole thing to the glory of God. What a miracle! He is able to relate to tragedy, death, loss, and failure, all to the glory of God! Hallelujah -- Praise God forever !

God has touched my physical body and wrought a miracle (which fact is true) is one thing but to know that my name is written in the Lamb's book of life and that I am born of God is greater.

Why is it that it is harder to realize this truth and to enter into spiritual phases of the subject of miracles as Christ desires us to do? Is it not due to the fact that (as Christians even) we are too much creatures of sense? God has given us the body in which we tabernacle or dwell. We are given five senses which act as reporters to us concerning the world in which we live. We see, hear, smell, taste and the natural man conducts his life accordingly, orders his steps and lives what we call the natural or physical life. These senses were in the original purpose of God, no doubt, to act as servants or aids to us, but since the fall, the physical has triumphed until today as a rule, man is held a prisoner to his sense life. This is the hindrance which we have from our ancestors and is sometimes called our old creation. It is governed by sight or the report of our senses.

The spiritual life is supernatural or above the natural. We are now, as Christians, introduced into another realm, elevated by the Spirit on to another plane where faith is the governing law or power. It is the work of the Spirit in our lives today to bring us out from the bondage and control of the old life, physical and natural, and to adjust us to God so that we shall truly live and move and have our being in God, or as the Word says, be seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

This does not mean that we are to become fanatical and disregard the body which God has given us and by unwise rules and extreme and foolish procedure try to extricate ourselves from the natural life with all of its activities. We are to recognize the body as our only vehicle let us go back to the first part of the prayer. With what is He first concerned ? Nothing less than the glory of God. It is a point to ponder -- "glorify Thy Son," and now listen! Verse 4: "I have glorified Thee on the earth." Isn't that wonderful! The first matter of value---the glory of God. " I have glorified Thee on the earth." The next phrase or thought is, How? "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Isn't that clear and sweet? First was the glory of God. How? By doing His will, "the work Thou gavest Me to do."

Shall we not get our bearings in this matter of spiritual living? Some are so at sea. I find many misfits in life. Why? Often it is due to desires, plans, ambitions, and schemes (good and often very religious) but not spiritual or related to God's will or purpose. Sometimes a dear soul forces his or her desire and plan upon another's life and he tries so hard to make a go of it just because it is to him a splendid plan. Many, many times God is not within a million miles of it. And he has a terrible time using the promises, trying to make God do things He has no intention of doing, for they do not relate to His purpose at all. Life need not be a tragedy. Do not quarrel with life, accept it. Then offer it to God and let Him relate it to His will and purpose. We may not enjoy all the phases of it--often we endure, but as long as we find life and its doings contingent upon His will, we can live.

Stop long enough for a spiritual adjustment and much of the friction will pass away. The dead man in a tomb was contingent upon the will of God in purpose, and faith was needed to thus relate it. Let us take a

little inventory of life. What is the real purpose and objective toward which you focus your living? Is it cluttered with the details of doing this, that, and the other ? Are you bound by a technical aspect? Not so much the doing. All the doing must relate. Do less and have it properly related, and life will take on spiritual proportions and color. God does not thank you or reward you for doing a thousand things (good and religious) which do not relate to His will. Seek His will---do that and you cannot but glorify Him.

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