

# The Horizon of Divine Purpose - Part 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being committed to the Holy Spirit and having a single, inclusive purpose in life in order to fulfill the purpose of God.*

**Duration:** 47:47

**Scripture:** Isaiah 58:1

**Topics:** "Divine Purpose"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a clear vision and purpose in the Christian life. He states that true vision and purpose are not just talked about, but are evidenced by a deep incentive and energy to pursue a specific goal. The speaker uses the example of the apostle Paul, who had a singular focus and was not tentative or uncertain in his pursuit of God's purpose. He encourages the audience to commit themselves to the leading and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill their purpose as Christians.

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## Transcript

With as little review of the afternoon message as possible, I want to go right on this evening from where we left off then. Just reminding you that what is before us inclusively is that with God everything is horizoned by one definite and clearly revealed purpose. That purpose is the hallmark of the Holy Spirit.

Wherever in the Word of God we come upon the Holy Spirit from the very first reference in the first words of the Bible to the last in the book of the Revelation. In the one case, the Spirit of God brooding upon the face of the deep. In the other and final case, the Spirit and the Bride say come.

From first to last, all the way through, whenever we come upon the Holy Spirit we come upon definiteness of purpose. We come upon the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of purpose. Not just an influence in general, an abstract thing somewhere in the air.

No, nothing like that. But a positive, definite registration of purpose. It is with that word and its meaning, that great spiritual thing that we are being engaged at this time.

We go back again to the prophet Ezekiel who is the interpreter of so much for us in the Old Testament. And we find that this man in a peculiar way is the man of the Spirit. If you have not done so, you can go through the book of his prophecies and just underline the word Spirit.

And it will be a revelation to you. How full the book is of the movements, the activities and the energies of the Spirit. In various ways, by different means, there is the Spirit.

And the prophet himself was a man of the Spirit. How often in recording his experience did he say and the Spirit took me up, led me out, brought me in, took me out, showed me. Man himself is truly under the government of the Spirit.

There are two things to say about that and may I interject that we must not look upon this just as Old Testament story, record. This is tremendously up-to-date, vitally up-to-date for ourselves. Firstly then, we note this.

That in order that the Spirit should reach his end and fulfill his divine purpose through a vessel, that vessel must be an absolutely committed vessel. Committed, surrendered, abandoned. And when we say that, of course the idea may catch on with us.

We may agree. We might even desire it to be so in our case. But I say to you, my dear friends, there is nothing more searching, more trying and more exacting than this matter of being committed to the Holy Spirit.

You look at Ezekiel's life and see what it meant to be committed to the Spirit. We shall see much of it. The Lord continues to lead us this way.

But just to remind you, Ezekiel by being committed to the Spirit had to do a great many things that the flesh completely revolts against. The natural man shrinks from doing. You are not going to make a fool of yourself if you can help it.

And he was called upon to do that. People laugh at him, what he's doing. Jeer and sneer.

He's doing such ridiculous things from the standpoint of this world's common sense. But he had to do them. Enough for the moment.

But it's all very well to say, I'm surrendered. I want to be surrendered. I'm going to be a surrendered man, surrendered woman.

Surrender myself wholly to God. Well, let's be quite frank and faithful about this. If you are, the whole, the whole thing is going to be taken out of your hands.

You are going where you would never go naturally. You are going by ways that you would never choose. From which you would turn back or away with all the shrinking of your natural life.

Other aspects, of course, perhaps happier and better. But there it is. Now, Ezekiel was a committed man.

Not in words alone. But day by day, day by day, faced with some fresh challenge of the spirit. Having laid upon him some fresh demand contrary to nature, his committal found him ready.

So ready that the spirit could just do as he liked with Ezekiel. Do as he liked with him. I say, let's search him.

That will find us out. But the realization of the full divine purpose demands that there are men and women and companies of men and women who are committed in that way to the Holy Spirit. May have a battle

over some things, but you'll fight it through.

You'll fight it through. You'll face it, realize what it implies, what it means. And you may shrink and you may hesitate.

You may feel you cannot, but you'll fight it through. At least you'll not surrender on the spot. But face this thing and get through with it however long it takes.

Committed. Our minds committed. Our wills committed.

Our hearts committed. Our bodies committed. Everything committed.

Came Ezekiel's case to his wife. He had there. And now God to have his way even in taking his wife.

Well, you see how he behaved. He's a committed man. That's the point.

And we're talking about God's great purpose. Everything being governed by purpose. It's the spirit who is the custodian of the eternal purpose.

The spirit who has this in charge. But. He must have vessels that are committed in this way.

There are of course the counterparts in the New Testament. The book of the Acts is in one sense the counterpart of the prophecies of Ezekiel. Here you have the spirit undoubtedly like the fiery chariot of God in Ezekiel.

The wheels and the living ones moving with the spirit in them. Whithersoever the spirit would go they went it seems. And Acts is undoubtedly the New Testament counterpart of Ezekiel in that sense.

And here you sometimes come up against a hitch. Even in an apostle. He's challenged about something that naturally and religiously and as he thought scripturally.

He would never do. He would never do. Peter had the scripture on his side when he said no unclean thing has ever passed my lips.

Not so Lord. I've got scripture for my position. The eleventh chapter of the book of Leviticus supports him in that position apparently.

The spirit thought otherwise. The cross had come in between Leviticus and Peter's time. Deal with all unclean things.

So that the spirit could say now because the cross is accomplished what God hath flinched. Call not thou unclean. And Peter had to adjust.

But there was a battle. There was a hitch. Spirit came up against something in the clay.

It was a very desperate situation. His apostleship was at stake. The purpose of God through such a man was in the balances of that.

Peter are you going to be committed to the spirit and let the spirit have his way. Or are you going to stand on your traditional ground. Your mental ground.

Well thank God Peter got through that battle. And proved his committal. And the spirit went on.

I just put that in as an illustration of what I mean. Book of the Acts. It's like that.

Spirit has got the purpose in hand. But he must have committed instruments. I said there were two things.

That's one. We can enlarge much upon that. But what we have to say later is about the breaking up of that.

Another thing is this. Do dear friends adjust your minds to this fact. That God raises up instruments and vessels in relation to his full purpose.

And those instruments and vessels are not something in themselves. And their ministry is not just bound up with them. Ezekiel's vocation.

God's choice of him. God's raising of him up. God's using of him.

His committal to the spirit. Was related to a people. Related to a people.

It was not his private ministry. His private anointing. The people were going to be held responsible for that ministry.

That ministry if it was going to be justified and vindicated would be found in a people. You must not say oh that's so and so's ministry. Or that is the ministry that they give at such and such a place.

That is a line of teaching. Or that is his particular emphasis. Beware.

Beware. They could have said that of Ezekiel. Well you see that's Ezekiel's ministry.

He's quite at liberty to fulfill it and carry it out. Let him do it. And when he's done it well the room will be made for someone else.

For others. And that's that. And write it off.

Anything that God has given of light or ministry that has been under the Holy Spirit is not for a time it's for eternity. It is not private. It is for the people of God.

And the people of God who come to the knowledge of it are going to be held responsible for it. Just dare not pass it off like that. Well that's just their emphasis.

Their line of teaching. Rather say is there God? Has God given that? Are there any marks or evidences of the anointing in that? Is the Lord with that? If so for all time and eternity you're responsible for that. It's in a people that it's to be found.

They may refuse. They may forbear and it may not be found to work out. All right.

Then what happens in the case of Ezekiel would be repeated. For in one of his visions of God he saw the glory being lifted away from Jerusalem and departing far away. And that's a terrible thing.

The glory to depart. The glory to depart. Well that's the general situation.

I said this afternoon I have a burden and I must get my burden off. Forgive me if I seem to be too emphatic. But it's very necessary dear friends for us to seriously face this thing.

God help us. If we are not in line with and sympathy with the Holy Spirit there's no help for us. And no hope for us.

The great need of our time is for the people of God to be caught up again in a mighty energetic movement of the Spirit of God. Yes. But the Spirit has his ways and he has his grounds.

Well now I have stated that in this inclusive way. Here we are confronted with this. On the one side the Spirit is the Spirit of a purpose.

A purpose. On the other side the Spirit must have a committed vessel or committed vessels. And I might add to that that it is not always, not always individual.

God has many times raised up a little company of people in which he has deposited his treasure and made it the example for others. So I say that because some of you might say well we're not all Ezekiel. We can't all be Ezekiel.

It'd be Ezekiel. But I repeat this is a relative or a related matter. This is not a personal thing at all.

So we come face to face with the major factor and distinctive feature of the purpose of God. The energy of the Holy Spirit. The book of Ezekiel like the book of Acts is the book of the goings of the Spirit.

The Spirit moving in purpose. Now we want to get inside that, get right inside that. Know what we shall find.

If we are really under this mighty impulse of the Spirit of God as we should be, as we may be, as indeed we are under obligation to be. When we say Ezekiel was a man of the Spirit, how was he a man of the Spirit? What was it that marked him as a man of the Spirit? When we say that the book of the Acts is the book of the mighty energetic goings of the Spirit. What do we mean? What do we find there? Oh dear friends, bear with me as I urge upon you with all my heart to be quite sure on this matter, quite clear.

We can use all the language, have all the phrases. We can speak about vision. We can protest that we have seen or that we have not lost the vision.

Some way or other like that we can talk. But what I want to so strongly emphasize here is this. Whether we have or have not lost vision and purpose can never be proved by our teaching.

And can never be proved by our order of service, by our form of worship. Now some of you are frowning, what do you mean by that? I say again you can have all the truth and all the teaching, all the language. And you can have the most exact order of things in your meetings.

You can have a perfect New Testament form of it and have lost the vision and the purpose. There was a cry of Isaiah, Isaiah 58, cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice and show my people their transgression. What comes next? Yes, they seek me daily, they delight to know my way.

How do you reconcile that? My people, their transgression, they delight to know my way. Seek me daily, in other words they protest that everything is alright. They would say we haven't lost the vision, got it all on the outside and you know how much there is in the prophets about this.

Continuing the ritual, the offering of the sacrifices, going through the rotor of the temple, it's all there. And yet Ichabod is written large, over the whole the glory has departed. No, I repeat we cannot prove it by our

words.

We cannot prove it by our forms. That is not it. That is not it.

That does not mean that the teaching doesn't matter. Or that our way of procedure is of no account, that's not the point. We can have all that, still we haven't got the proof.

The proof comes by the characteristics. Stand back then from all the teaching, stand back from all the careful order and procedure and ask questions about these things that we are going to mention. Look, check me up by the scriptures, see if this is not true.

That the evidence, the proof that the spirit was really in charge on the move was in the first place. The evidence, the evidence in those concerned, be it Ezekiel or a company or the church in the book of the Acts. The evidence, the evidence was found in this.

A dynamic incentive which had captivated the people with one mighty objective. A people of a tremendous incentive. A people of an incentive.

Ezekiel was a man of incentive. See, notice how it begins, the prophecies. The word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel.

Right there at the beginning, the note of the whole book is struck. What is it? What are you meeting and feeling and sensing all the way through? The element of precision, the element of urgency. You find it in a hundred different ways why he dates everything.

This is when it happened, on that specific day, in that specific month, on that specific year. I give you the very day when it happened, that's precision. That's definiteness, there's nothing general about that.

Nothing nebulous about that. His places tells you exactly where it happened. Right to a detail in his temporal presentation.

Notice, here, there, every point, he's marking it. It's something marked. Not just giving you a general picture of things, but he's giving you every fraction of it marked.

This book is a book of expressness, if I may put it like that. The word came to Ezekiel expressly, and here's a man who is on that line, he's like that. Oh, are you a person like that? Am I a person like that? Are you a company of people like that? Whenever you meet, as a company, you give the atmosphere here a company of people who are gathered up, really gathered up and captivated by an objective toward which they are moving without any reservation.

People with an incentive. That's the proof that you've got the vision. Not talking about vision.

That's the proof that you've got the purpose. You're in the purpose. Not talking about purpose.

That's the proof that you understand the teaching. It's caught you. It's gripped you.

It's made hold of you. To use Jeremiah's phrase, it's a fire in your bones. You may be discouraged.

These prophets were very discouraged. Sometimes brought almost to a standstill, still in their difficulty, their perplexity. Jeremiah will cry, Oh God, you've disillusioned me.

That's a terrible thing to say to God. Go through what they went through and you'll understand. Times like that, but the fact is they went on and fulfilled their ministry, not because of their own resolution.

This fire was in their bones. The mighty incentive. I said, the prophet said, I said, I will no more speak.

But when I kept silent, when I kept silent, well the fire burned. And I up and let it again. That may be spread over a long history.

It may go down in discouragement and in perplexity. Even in broken heartedness over things and fear you could go on no longer. But somehow or other, yes, we know how.

The Spirit is in charge. He's got a grip upon the life. On you go again.

That were not true. You can take it that the one who's talking to you would not be on this platform today. It's like that.

That's the proof that you've got vision. That you're in the purpose. The Spirit is the energetic, dynamic incentive of purpose.

Running parallel with that. There is this characteristic of the impact of purpose. Not only it's energy and it's dynamic, it's incentive.

But it registers. Those people know what they're after. That man knows where he's going.

There's nothing tentative about them. Nothing tentative. Nothing indefinite.

These people are that person. They are not beating the air. He or she is not beating the air.

Like Paul, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. None of that. There is this registration of an impact of purpose.

So it was perhaps pre-eminently with the Apostle Paul. This one thing I do. This one thing I do.

My dear friends, what is our single, inclusive purpose in being? Have you got one? Have you become master by it? A single purpose in life. Purpose that you bring into your business. Into your profession.

Into your home. Into wherever you are. Whatever people may have to say about you.

And they can level many criticisms at you. And perhaps rightly so. And they on many points have some disparaging things to say.

But they have to come back to this. That person, that person has a great incentive for God. They are bent upon the interest of the Lord.

And there's no doubt about it. That's a characteristic of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is never abstract.

Is never indefinite. Is never passive. The Holy Spirit is never indefinite.

Meet him anywhere. And you meet one who is definite and deliberate. Carries always with him this.

I'm on business. Come with me. Go with me.

Or if you will not, I will not carry. I'm going on. I am going on.

For the Holy Spirit is one who goes on. You find him. You find him going on.

You may stop or you may take a detour. You come back to the Lord. You still find that he is going on.

I'm very glad you know that in the midst of all our difficulties and troubles. We find the Lord's going on. The Lord's going on.

Oh let's catch on with the Lord. I'm Terry by the way. Deep sense of being apprehended, gripped and mastered by a single purpose that runs through every aspect of our lives.

And we haven't any aspect of life apart from this one object for which we have been apprehended by Christ Jesus. May I say again, this is not always only individual. The Lord has called his church to be like this.

If he cannot get the whole, he'll get parts of it like this. Link on with something that is like this. Or ask the Lord to bring you into something like this.

Because the end, as we said this afternoon, has got to be fully corporate and collective. Well, let's go on. Note another characteristic of the spirit when he is really on the moon.

You have Ezekiel very much in mind, but we have much more of the New Testament also in mind. You will notice that when the spirit really gets home, is in charge, there is created a growing intelligence in those concerned. There's an intelligence, a knowledge that grows with the government of the Holy Spirit.

Thinking of Ezekiel, of course, it's symbolic, we know. And there you have Ezekiel says, I saw visions in the spirit, I saw. Then, you remember, there's that symbolic chariot of God.

The cherubim, wheels, they're great. He says, they're full of eyes. Full of eyes.

Full of eyes. Full of eyes. And the spirit is in them itself.

Well, that's Old Testament symbolism, if you like. It's repeated in the book of the Revelation. But what does it mean from the New Testament standpoint, and therefore, for us, it's this.

Paul is on his knees in his prison. He's on his knees. And he is praying for the saints.

And that means you and me. The church for the whole dispensation, although at the time he had the churches of his day foremost in his mind. The spirit meant more than that.

And what is he praying? Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation. In the knowledge of him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened. You may know what is the hope of his calling.

The riches of his inheritance in the saints. The exceeding greatness of his power. A spirit of wisdom and revelation opening the eyes of the heart.

There it is. Spirit as the spirit of spiritual intelligence. And dear friends, I'm certain that most of you will go with me when I say perhaps one of the greatest needs amongst the Lord's people, today, in the Lord's people, is spiritual understanding and intelligence.

Oh, the ignorance. Oh, the ignorance. You can go about this so-called Christian country.

You can find scattered over the length and breadth of this land, and it's true of other lands, halls and meeting places called chapels and churches where Christians gather together. And they hear the Bible read, and they hear sermons, and they attend prayer meetings. You begin to speak to them about the Lord, and they look at you as though you're a foreigner speaking a foreign language.

They don't know what you're talking about. Now, that's not exaggeration, that's proof, and some of you know it is. You cannot get beyond the most alien military base with a vast number of Christians who have been Christians for decades.

Don't understand you? Not surprised, are you? There's confusion and weakness and lack of impact. Lack of impact. Believe me, dear friends, this impact, this registration of which we are speaking, coming from the Holy Spirit, will come through people who know the Lord, who know where they stand, and whose knowledge is increasing all the time.

Spiritual intelligence. Pray for it. The eyes of your heart be enlightened.

This is not the alone prerogative of the prophets. The seers. In this great letter, from which we just quoted, Paul's prayer for this very thing for the saints.

In that very letter he says to them all, be filled with the Spirit. What do you mean? A lot of effervescence, bubbling over, noise, emotion. Oh, be intelligent people just as much.

Just as much. For the Holy Spirit is as much the Spirit of intelligence as He is the Spirit of energy. Of emotion.

That then is a test. Have we got the vision? Have we? Are we in the purpose? And one more thing. For the moment.

Notice, the movement of the Spirit in Ezekiel, and in Acts, and in Ephesians, is a spirit of integration. I take out of Ezekiel's prophecies the well-known illustration of the valley full of dry bones, examine them again, do what Ezekiel did, pass to and fro in the valley. They are very many, very many, and very dry.

And although it does not say so explicitly, it does say in effect that they are very scattered and unrelated, because when the Spirit moved they came together. But here they are. So many, many unrelated bones.

Detached bones. Dry, un nourished, dead. Scattered bones.

What a picture. How true? Too much? Do we know? Scattered. Disintegrated.

Separated. Separated. Divided.

Existing apart. Now the Spirit comes. Come, O thou wind, thou breath, and breathe upon these bones.

And as I prophesied, there was a noise. They are Pentecostal chapters. And there was a noise.

And bone came to each bone. They were all articulated and integrated. Clothed upon a marriage.

Filled with life and filled with power. A mighty army. Now my point in all that is just this.

When the Spirit moves, when the Spirit moves, He integrates. He gets over the dividedness. He gets over the separations.

He gets over the isolation. He gets over the individualism. It's the Spirit of integration.

It's perfectly clear that this state of things in Ezekiel was not God's mind for His people. Because when the Spirit moves, He shows what God's mind really is. When you get to the book of the Acts and you find it's like that.

It's like that. There's integration right from the beginning of the Spirit's movement. But the Apostle in the letter to the Ephesians, so called, is concerned that the Spirit shall, shall be able to do this very work.

He sees this. That an army is needed. The Church in the form of an army.

Because we wrestle with principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and host of wicked spirits. We're in the battle. Fight! We're in the battle.

Church must be on its feet, integrated to meet this. Because He knows very well that the enemy can have it all his own way if in the first place he can get in between the Lord's people and divide. And then He can drive the wedge more and more deeply in to put them further and further apart.

That's His day. Church is out of the fight. So the Apostle in this very letter, true, true to the background, true to the whole theme, says, and grieve not the Holy Spirit.

And grieve not. I must leave you, dear friends, to apply that, to work that out, as I do myself. I must leave it with you to find out whether your way is a way that grieves the Holy Spirit.

Personally or collectively, is the Spirit grieved? If the Spirit is grieved, we're disintegrated. And we're out of the fight. Cannot stand up to the enemy.

We're defeated. He's having it all his own way. When the Spirit is grieved.

When He is grieved, we do fall apart. We do. For any reason, whatever, that the Spirit is grieved, it's grieved.

And the Spirit is grieved when we are fallen apart. Make no mistake about this. It's a terrible thing to have to live and go on with a grieved Holy Spirit.

It really takes all the heart out of you. It saps all the vitality. Drains all the life.

Makes the going very hard when the Spirit's grieved. Oh, we must attend to this to see why it is and where it is. And labor at it.

So the Apostle says, not only grieve not the Holy Spirit. Give diligence. Make it your business to keep to unity.

For very much larger, larger reasons than just getting on nicely and happily together. Having a pleasant time. There are all the issues of God's eternal purpose bound up with this.

There is a thing for which you've been saved. Chosen in Christ. Called by His grace.

Kept by His power. It's a big thing that's in view. The whole thing is jeopardized when the Spirit is grieved.

And we are disintegrated. Don't forget that the enemy sees the value and advantage of having a disintegrated state amongst the Lord's people much more clearly than we do. And lays very much more value upon it than we do.

Gives very much more importance to it than we do. He knows that His kingdom, His kingdom will remain intact while the church is a divided and disintegrated thing. And He knows that His kingdom is menaced and threatened when the people of God are together in this integration of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord help us. I think that's all I dare say this evening. Perhaps you think it's enough.

Well, it's enough to face. It's enough to work out. May I come back? Because there's a lot more going to be said yet.

The Lord wills. But may I come back here? So this is what I meant at the beginning when I said that the Lord must have committed people. Do you see what it means? Here it is.

These are the issues. These are the values. This is the tremendous importance.

Oh then Lord, I commit myself to this. In a new way I commit myself to this. Stand on the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself.

If thee being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children. How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Stand on that. Cry, Father, your Son has said how much more you'll give the Spirit.

I'm for that. I stand for that. Don't let the Lord go over this matter.

Be committed. Let us all be committed in a new way to this life and government energy of the Holy Spirit in relation to the very thing for which we are Christians in this place tonight.

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