

The Pilgrimage To A Spirit-Led Life

Part Twenty

Last time we covered **Romans 8:17-25** and saw that God wanted us to look beyond our own redemption to that of **all** His Creation – physical and spiritual.

The purpose behind this is to lift our vision beyond our own personal life and problems and begin to see events from the same perspective as God does.

God links His Physical Creation with His Spiritual Creation to enable us limited human beings to more fully understand His overall Purpose, to restore righteousness to His Creation, replacing the man-created evil.

When we see, accept and put our faith in this great Plan of God, the end result for us is **hope**.

Romans 8:24 [NIV] *“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?”*

For Paul the human situation that he was a part of and experienced every day was **not** a hopeless situation.

Paul saw man’s sin and the painful end results of that sin.

He saw the state of the world and the hopeless situation of humanity.

Paul also saw God’s Redeeming Power illustrated to him through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, and the end of all this for Paul was hope.

The future that Paul saw was **not** a world encompassed by sin, death and decay, but a future that was eagerly anticipated, liberation, renovation and re-creation brought about by the Power of God.

Paul’s life was **not** a weary, defeated and waiting but a throbbing, vivid expectation of good.

The key-note of a Christian life is always hope and never despair.

The Christian waits actively **not** for death but for life with a capital “L”.

Romans 8:28 [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

As a result of what has just been shown we can know this also.

If we really do understand and have faith in what God has done, is doing and will do for us, we cannot but love Him, understand and harmonise with His Purpose for calling us.

Faith in God and harmonising with His Will are the only conditions that there are to this great Promise of God.

When we fulfil these two conditions, we can be assured that whatever happens to us is part of the outworking of God’s Plan for us; whatever the outward sign and conditions are, the ultimate end product will be good for us and all whom we come in contact with.

Even if we do love God, based on gratitude for what He has done and are called by God, yet are **not** yet walking in His Purpose, God will guide us towards a change in our lives that will end in our fulfilling His Purpose.

Hosea 2:6-7 [NIV] *“Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.’”*

In the context of Israel going astray, God said He would place thorny hedges and walls in the path we choose until we return to Him.

If we find our lives continually facing “*hedges of thorns and brick walls*” perhaps we need to stop, take stock and seek God’s Purpose for our lives in prayerful meditation.

When I look back on my past life there is one thing I am truly grateful for – that God **didn’t** answer some of my prayers, for in hindsight I see that the end of such a path would **not** have been good.

Romans 8:29-30 [NIV] *“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*

These two verses explain more fully why everything is working for good in our lives.

In these two verses we have the total Plan of God from eternity to eternity.

If we understand this Plan of God, believe in it and harmonise with it, we will have total security and peace of mind in our lives.

The first thing we need to understand about this plan is, **it didn’t start with us, it started with God and God never takes on anything He is not capable of completing.**

Once we believe that God initiated this plan in our lives we can have confidence that it will be completed.

Stage 1: God foreknew us

1 Peter 1:2 [NIV] *“who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”*

God didn’t act in ignorance.

He didn’t experiment.

He knew in advance what kind of people we would be, how He would deal with us, how He would work out His Plan for us.

We are **not** where we are by accident; everything in our lives has been foreknown and planned by God from eternity.

How did God do this?

God is transcendent, existing outside of His Physical Creation of which time and space are a part of that creation.

Stage 2: God chose us

Chosen by God according to His foreknowledge.

God's Choice of us is based on His Knowledge of us, He knows what we are like, and He knows what He can make of us.

Ephesians 1:3-4 [NIV] *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love**”*

Chosen before the foundation of the world.

John 15:16 [NIV] *“**You did not choose me, but I chose you** and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

We are where we are and who we are not because we made the choice but because God made the choice.

When we understand this it makes a great difference to our attitude to ourselves and to our situation.

Stage 3: He predestined us

God pre-arranged in advance the course our life would follow.

Ephesians 1:5 [NIV] *“he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will,”*

God worked it all out in advance.

“Predestined” Greek “*proorizo*” to limit in advance – planned route –

Ephesians 1:11 [NIV] *“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,”*

It is God's Will for us that has been planned in advance – **but this does not take away our free will.**

God's unseen guiding is in our lives, leading us along the path He has planned for us to follow, **but** we can refuse it and take our own path.

Yet when we do stray from the prepared path, God's great Love will **not** give up on us.

Matthew 18:11-14 [NIV] *“For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.”*

Parable showing the Love of our Great Shepherd.

God will go to great lengths to bring us back onto the chosen path.

Ephesians 2:10 [NIV] *“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

We don't have to make our own decision of what we are to do in life but seek out what God has prepared for us to do.

God created us to do certain things in life and if we are in harmony with that purpose we find fulfilment and peace of mind.

If we are continually frustrated in what we are trying to do we are probably not doing what God created us to do and predestined us to do.

Trying to do our own thing and not God's thing.

Stage 4: He called us and saved us

Romans 8:30 [NIV] *“And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*

The word “called” also means invited.

This is the point where God's Plan comes out of eternity and into time.

Romans 11:29 [NIV] *“for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.”*

The calling of God is a one time only not reversible – we are set in something that is totally secure, God will never change His mind about the calling He has given to us.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 [NIV] *“He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Called through the Gospel – an invitation to share the Fellowship of God through His Son.

1 John 1:3 [NIV] *“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. **And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**”*

This was the message the Apostles were preaching.

No greater invitation can ever be received. Never treat it lightly or reject it.

Matthew 22:1-5 [NIV] *“Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ “But they paid no attention and went off, one to his field, another to his business.”**”*

The Gospel invitation.

Luke 14:15-20 [NIV] *“When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, **“Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”** Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ “Still another said, ‘I have just got married, so I can't come.’”*

Did not see the value of this invitation.

2 Timothy 1:9 [NIV] *“who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,”*

When we are called we are also saved. A Holy calling that must take priority over everything else in our lives.

Titus 3:3-6 [NIV] *“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, **he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour,”*

A definite point in time when God saved us.

“Saved” Greek “*sozo*” to deliver and to protect – preserve – to deliver from bondage.

We pass out of death into life, out of condemnation into Righteousness of God.

The greatest single transition that can ever take place in the life of any person.

Stage 5: Justification

Acquitted – reckoned righteous – just as if I had never sinned.

Justified **when** we respond to the call.

Isaiah 61:10 [NIV] *“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. **For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**”*

Clothed with salvation and robed with God’s Righteousness – note reference to a marriage in same verse.

When we in faith accept what God did for us through the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ [our Saviour] we have God’s Righteousness imputed to us.

Stage 6: Glorified

All who are justified are also glorified.

Note it is in the **past tense**.

It is done now through our faith in Jesus, and the glory of the Father being in us, the Holy Spirit and Christ in us.

1 Corinthians 2:1-8 [NIV] *“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. **No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.** None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*

Not the wisdom of men but hidden wisdom of God “*for our glory*”.

Holy Spirit brings this to our remembrance [**John 14:26**]

Christ God’s Wisdom in us [**1 Corinthians 1:24**]

Stage 7: Enthroned with Christ

Ephesians 2:4-6 [NIV] *“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved. **And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,**”*
Sit with Christ.

Revelation 5:10 [NIV] *“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

Kings and Priests to reign on Earth.

Revelation 20:4 [NIV] *“I saw thrones on which were seated **those who had been given authority to judge.** And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**”*

Reign with Christ.

All this is what God does for and to us.

We do nothing of ourselves except exercise faith [and faith is given to us as a fruit of the Holy Spirit in us].

Paul emphasises this for he well knows that pride in a person’s heart can wreck the plan God has for them, by causing them to rely on their own [self] righteousness and not in humility accepting the Righteousness of God.