

THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF A PLAN

(continued)

There are opportunities all around us. Some time ago I drove into my yard and a man was digging a pipeline ditch in the neighbor's yard. He needed an excuse to rest so he spoke to me. I responded and the conversation led to me asking: "where do you go to church?" He admitted he was formerly a mormon but had not been to church in awhile. I invited him to my church with the assurance that he would experience Jesus in a personal way and his life would be changed. With a smile on his face he promised to come and asked directions. A seed was sown just like that.

I share a thought from **Hebrews 11 & 12**. The **O.T. saints** never realized the fulfillment of many promises, and we are told they comprise a great cloud of witnesses watching every generation—which includes ours—hoping and praying that we will usher in the return of Christ and the last promises made to them will be fulfilled. You know what that means to me? It means that every generation is a link in the chain from Adam until the Lord's return—and each of us is a link of sorts in that generational chain. Don't be a broken link in that divine generational chain. Lift up your spiritual eyes. Remember the promises to Christ's church. Be in prayer for the plan God has for your life that it will be fulfilled. Be faithful to do what your hand finds to do until God opens a bigger door. Be obedient, trust the Lord to guide and provide, and believe for greater things than ever before in your life.

Remember—every ministry begins with a purpose and a plan, and every purpose is discovered when we pray in faith until God reveals our calling and ministry. Continued prayer will allow God to reveal the plan and prepare us to implement the ministry to fulfill His (and our) divine purpose. All the great men and women in Bible history were people who learned the value and power of prayer before God led them into situations which required unshakable faith. **Mighty Man or Woman** of God—how is your prayer life? Prayer and Bible study are where God reveals His divine purpose for our lives—and then helps us shape the plans to fulfill that divine purpose. If God be for you and with you—no man or demon can prevent your success!

Some reading this lesson may be older ministers, pastors, teachers, missionaries, People who have heard God's call on their heart. They have ministered at various capacities but find themselves less busy for one reason or another. Some of you know you are just where God wants you and are happy in pursuing the course you are on. Others are in transition. For some reason you are praying and waiting on the Lord for another assignment. Maybe you simply need clarification. Maybe you face big problems and don't know how to solve them—and you may feel like cutting and running. Maybe you need a time of rest for reflection and/or perhaps redirection. Some are in the twilight years and not many doors are open for you; you may have health or financial problems; maybe you have relocated for some reason and don't have friends near by. It is not pleasant to feel like the world is passing you by; but don't live on the plains of despair, God says you can still bear fruit in your aging years (**Psalm 92:13,14**). The Bible says we should willingly do what tasks come our way, and again—give thanks for everything. May I remind you that this is an important key to victory and answer to prayer when we seem to be at a stalemate. Let me repeat this key: *whatever opportunity, task, service comes your way, no matter how trivial, do it as unto the Lord, and do it joyfully giving thanks to God (Col. 3:23)*.

In my mid-seventies we moved away from everything familiar—churches, other ministries, shopping and friends—to a new area to help provide physical care for family. We finally found a thriving, friendly, spiritually gifted and missionary minded church. I could see several areas of ministry where I was experienced, but younger, energetic, up-and-coming men and women were given the opportunities. Oh there were many "*trifling*" things we could do like greeting at the door, visiting the sick and those in rest homes, directing traffic in the parking lot; or help keep the building and grounds clean and attractive. I referred to these as "*trifling ministries*", but only from the perspective of having been there and done that, because all of these are essential ministries in any church.

In our new church we began in those "*trifling*" ministries where a smile and a handshake can transform a disgruntled attendee into a happier mood ready to worship the Lord. Leading a home group we could teach, encourage and minister to others; and eventually in the altar ministry we could draw from

experience and Scripture memorization to help a seeker move toward a fulfilled life serving the Lord. And I have discovered another blessing—I can choose my pace. No more firing all the pistons to gain horse power; running double time to keep ahead of the pack; no more over-extending myself trying to advance. And I am happy in this role for what it is

Now I am happy to report that God has opened new doors for me on a somewhat larger platform. For years I was a writer for publication. I sorted through reports, condensed them, inserted adjectives and verbs here and there to make them both interesting and challenging. I learned the journalism trade. For years I went overseas on short trips to encourage missionaries and national leaders. I Taught in churches and pastor's conferences and conducted open-air crusades. I evaluated the field work and submitted reports for action, and prepared articles to promote funds for mission work. It was after some 50 years with that ministry, in semi-retirement and having moved to another city, that I found myself sort of on the sidelines—but I kept semi-busy as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Some readers today may identify with my experience. Well, take heart. Don't give up. Do what comes your way and be happy and thankful in the Lord (**Colossians 3:17**).

Little did I know that in God's scheme another door would open so that I could practice my trade again—but at a slower pace. Friends—we don't know what lies ahead. Only God knows our future. It is our task to be ready when the call comes. I never dreamed that there would be a time and need at a national ministry for the very experience I gained through the more active years of my life. But an unexpected door opened for me to use management skills and journalistic talent—and I was in the right place at the right time to again serve God's kingdom in a significant way.

And the Lord did something else I didn't expect. At my age I didn't think I would ever travel abroad again. I have logged so many miles, sat in cramped seats, and waited in terminals for connecting flights. Traveling is no longer adventurous for me; and living on Social Security I didn't have the financial resources. But God did the unexpected. He provided a financial resource that my wife and I dedicated for mission and charity purposes. This fund has enabled us to support missions, assist friends with short-term, interest free loans caused by economic downturns—and a return to the mission fields again. I have made one trip to West Africa and two trips to the Philippine Islands—and a ministry trip to Russia. The pastors and leaders know me and want me to share my experiences and Bible lessons with them. Is God good or what? In the Philippines they sang this chorus over and over and it was imbedded in my spirit—it says: *"Our God is great...our God is good...our God is faithful...and He never changes."* I can say a hearty "Amen!"

I named this lesson: **The purpose and power of a plan.** God has a plan for each one of us, and it is up to us to be in the right place at the right time so that God's power can bring everything together. I am trying to bring the right perspective to your circumstances so that God's plan for the rest of your life can and will be fulfilled. Let it be clear in your mind that circumstances and age have little to do with your future—well, a little perhaps—but not enough to thwart God's purposes.

To you who are older, perhaps retired, and the door for ministry isn't open as in past years, look and pray for opportunities that fit your gifting and experience. God might even have you do something totally unexpected like mentoring younger Christians. **To you who are younger**—be patient and prepare for the ministry God has planned for you. God knows when and where to use your gifts and ministry but you need to be prepared. Your immediate focus may be to know how to prepare for your eventual role in life. So make plans to have regular prayer and Bible study, and develop relationships with other believers. Get involved in church activities so you can be observed by leaders and, in time, be trained for ministry at different levels, perhaps a leadership role down the road.

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