



GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

By Jerry Pourcy

In Acts chapter 9 the Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto the man called Saul of Tarsus, saved him and changed his name to Paul and made him the apostle to the Gentiles. In Acts chapter 26, Paul is talking to King Agrippa about when Christ appeared unto him the first time, notice what the Lord told Paul as we read verse 16,

"16 But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;"

It's very easy to see here that the Lord told Paul that he was going to show him some things at a later date.

As we read Paul's epistles we see that there were many things called "mysteries" that were revealed unto him. The dispensation of grace and the catching away (the Rapture), were a few of these mysteries that were revealed unto him, and as he received them from the Lord, he taught them unto others.

Even the apostle Peter acknowledged that there was a special wisdom given unto the apostle Paul. Notice in 2nd Peter chapter 3, Peter said,

"15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

So by these scriptures we see that the apostle Paul had some special things that were revealed unto him. Around Acts chapter 19, Paul wrote 1st and 2nd Corinthians. At this point in time, Paul has already had many things revealed unto him and he is expecting more. Notice what Paul said in 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 verse 1,

"1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord."

Paul was not given everything he needed to teach at one time, but rather in steps. Just as we go to Bible study to learn about the Lord and the things that he has for us, it takes time. You don't get everything in one visit. Later on you will see that Paul had to suffer some things before he could understand other things.

1st Corinthians chapter 13 is called the love chapter because it deals with love or charity. But a closer look will reveal many hidden truths associated with charity. It is really a truly amazing chapter in the Bible. So let's get started in verse 1.

"1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Now please pay strict attention to the following verses. They are of utmost importance.

“8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

I'm sure that you can easily see in verse 8 that Paul said that speaking in tongues was going to cease, but the big question is, "When?" In verse 10 it says, "when that which is perfect is come." A lot of people that claim that they can speak in tongues, say, "When that which is perfect is come", is referring to when the Lord comes back to this earth.

This can't be true for the very simple reason that the Lord Jesus Christ is never referred to as a that in the holy scriptures.

Now if the scripture would have said, "When He which is perfect is come," or, "When Him which is perfect is come," then I would have to agree that the verse was talking about the Lord. But Paul is referring to a revelation that he is going to receive sometime later in the future. Let's read on,

“11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

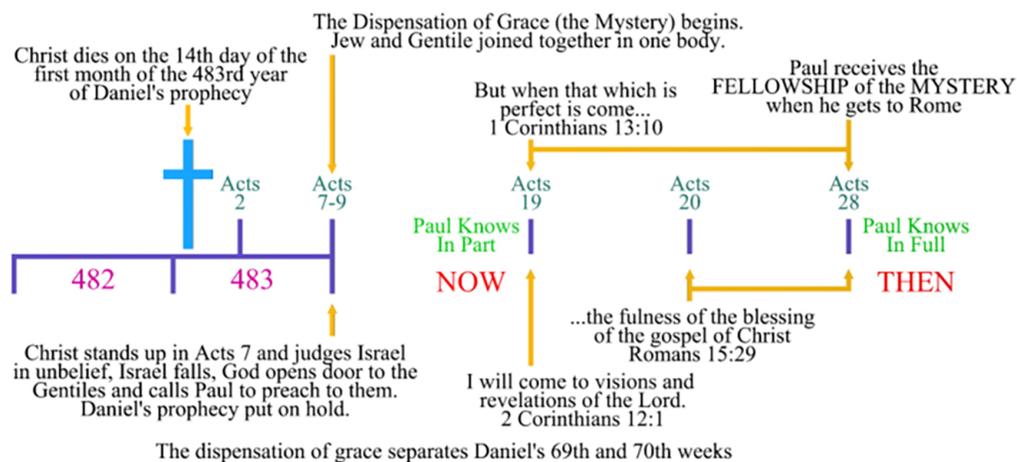
12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

Once again, before we go on, I want to remind you that the context of the whole chapter here is charity. This is very important because what was revealed to Paul later on has to do with love or charity, as you will see.

In verse 12, Paul is talking about 2 time periods, one he calls, "Now", which is referring to the time that he is writing the epistle, and the other he calls, "Then", referring to a time at a later date.

Have you ever walked inside to a dimly lit room with sunglasses on and could barely see? You can make out images of furniture and people but the details are obscure. At the time Paul writes this letter, he's got a basic idea of what that which is perfect is, but the details are fuzzy. He knows that it has to do with love or charity, but he says, "Now we see through a glass, darkly;" because all of the details were not yet revealed to him. Paul said that he knew in part, but he also knew that he would understand fully at a later date when it would be revealed unto him as this chart indicates:



Sometime later, Paul writes the book of Romans around the time period of Acts chapter 20.

In this epistle, the apostle Paul explains to the people of Rome that he is going to come see them. In Romans chapter 15, let's start in verse 28,

"28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I will come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

As you probably already know, Paul never made it to Spain, but rather was thrown in prison. But he did make it to Rome, in a roundabout way. In verse 29 he explains to them that when he gets there, he's going to have something that he calls, "The fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Now whatever this is, he knows that he will have it when he gets there. If he would have had it at the time that he wrote the letter, I'm sure that he would have given it to them, but he didn't so he couldn't. Nevertheless, he did know that he would eventually get it.

So let's get a rundown of what we have so far, and also place them in their proper time slots.

1.) In Acts 9, the Lord saves Paul and sends him to the Gentiles, and also tells him that he will be receiving things later on down the line.

2.) In Acts 19, Paul says tongues will cease when that which is perfect is come. (1st Cor. 13:8-10)

3.) In Acts 19, Paul says that he will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. (2nd Cor. 12:1)

4.) In Acts 20, Paul says when he gets to Rome that he will have the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.(Romans 15:29)

The ceasing of tongues and of these other powers, was all based around when Paul received his revelation when he got to Rome. So you are probably thinking, "What did Paul receive when he got to Rome?" Well, before we get into all the details, let's go back to see some of the tidbits of information we get from Paul.

Paul said, "When that which is perfect is come...", so we know that it has something to do with perfection or being perfect. He also said, "Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known", so it has to do with knowledge or with knowing something. And from the context of 1st Corinthians 13, we know that it has to do with love or charity. In Romans he says, "I will come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

Once again, whatever Paul received when he got to Rome had to do with being full or fulness. Let's write these down so that we can remember them easier.

- 1) PERFECT
- 2) KNOW
- 3) LOVE
- 4) FULNESS

When Paul got to Rome, while he was in prison, he wrote the epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians and to Philemon. When he was released from prison, he wrote 1st Timothy and Titus. When he was returned again to prison, he wrote his last and final epistle, 2nd Timothy.

But it is in the epistle to the Ephesians in which Paul reveals to us that which is perfect.

In Ephesians chapter 3, Paul starts out teaching about the dispensation of grace, which was already known by other Christians, but as we get into verse 8, the subject matter changes and Paul reveals unto us the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Let's begin to read in verse 8,

"8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"

There are 2 main things I would like for you to get from this verse. The first one is that this thing was given to Paul, and the second is that it is unsearchable, in other words, you can't learn it from searching the scripture, God grants it unto you by his Holy Spirit as you will see in verse 16. Let's continue:

"9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,"

Notice here that he says that the manifold wisdom of God is now revealed. This next verse of scripture is of extreme importance, please read it about three times and then dwell on it for a minute.

"11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:"

Question: What was the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord? Any idea at all? The answer will be revealed shortly.

"12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;"

And here it is:

"19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Question: If you want to be filled with all the fulness of God, what do you have to know?

The love of Christ.

This is what was revealed to Paul when he got to Rome, that we could know the love of Christ and that this was God's eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Knowing that Jesus loved us is not knowing the love of Christ. Paul is saying that we can have the same love that Jesus had for the brethren. A Christian that knows the love of Christ has special traits about them, but we will come back to this in a moment. Right now, let's go to Ephesians chapter 4. Starting in verse 11 it says,

"11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pas-tors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"

In a few Christians, there is a time in their life when they come unto the knowledge of the Son of God, (they know the love of Christ), and they become a perfect man, they come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, in other words: a full grown Christian.

There are a lot of people that are saved, but very few of them know the love of Christ. And also, you can't teach Christians to know the love of Christ. God grants it unto you by his Holy Spirit. A preacher or teacher can teach many wonderful things out of the scripture to make Christians understand the word of God, for instance, about Christ dying and paying for our sins, eternal security, the dispensation of grace, etc. But you can't teach someone to know the love of Christ.

So you may ask, "What is it to know the love of Christ?" Well, as I stated before, I can't teach you but I can show you the results of a person that does know. A person that knows the love of Christ has certain traits and acts differently than everybody else. For a better understanding, let's go to Matthew chapter 5. Starting in verse 43, it says,

"43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

Before we read the next verses, I would like to ask you a few questions. How would you ever learn to love your enemies if you never had any enemies? How would you ever learn to bless them that curse you if you have never been cursed? How would you ever learn to do good to them that hate you if you have never been hated? How would you learn to pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you if you have never been despitefully used or persecuted?

If you serve the Lord with all your heart, you will have enemies, as Jesus did, you will be cursed, as Jesus was, you also will be hated, despitefully used and persecuted just as our Lord was. The Bible says, "... all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

But what if you don't serve the Lord? You might not ever have any enemies. You might not ever get cursed. You might not ever be hated. And you might not ever be despitefully used or persecuted. You see, these things come from serving the Lord. Paul had to go through these things before he could understand. A person that knows the love of Christ, loves his enemies, he blesses them that curse him, he does good to them that hate him, and he prays for them which despitefully use and persecute him. Now let's read on:

"45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if you love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore PERFECT, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Question: Can a man be perfect? According to this scripture, he sure can. But please don't confuse being perfect with being sinless, because they are not the same; for there are no sinless men. Do you remember the scripture that we read in Ephesians chapter 4? Let's read it again,

"13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"

Christians that know the love of Christ also are willing to take wrong for one another. Christ took our wrong and put it on himself and we should be willing to take wrong for one another. For instance, let's go to 1st Corinthians chapter 6. Paul says:

"6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud and that your brethren."

And Paul follows through with his teachings when he writes to Philemon. He is referring to Philemon's ex-servant, Onesimus, when he says,

"18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides."

Another trait that follows people that know the love of Christ, is that they are willing to lay down their lives for their brethren. In John chapter 15 verse 13, Jesus said,

"13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Jesus was willing to lay down his life for his friends, in fact Jesus was willing to lay down his life for the whole world. If you are willing to lay down your life for your friends, the Lord says that there is no greater love than this.

In other words, you have the same love that Jesus has. You know the love of Christ. As I said before, there are a lot of Christians out in this world, but very few of them are willing to lay down their life for someone else. They might be saved but they do not know the love of Christ. Let's go to 1st John now and get a verse to back this up. In chapter 3 verse 16 it says,

"16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

There are a few people that I would like to show you from the scriptures, that knew the love of Christ. The first one, as you probably guessed is the apostle Paul. In Romans chapter 9, Paul starts out by saying something that you would think that an apostle of the Lord wouldn't have to say; "I'm not lying." Why would the apostle Paul have to start out a section of his letter by saying, I'm not lying? It's because what he is about to say is very, very hard to believe.

"1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 That I have a great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

4 Who are Israelites;..."

As you know, being accursed from Christ is suffering eternal damnation. The apostle Paul was willing to give up his eternal life, if it would get his brethren saved. I realize that this is hard to believe, but this is exactly how Paul felt. Not only was Paul willing to lay down his life for his brethren, but he went a little extra more and was willing to give up his eternal life for his brethren, which I'm sure is a very difficult thing to do.

Another person is Moses. Do you remember when Moses came down off the mountain and found the children of Israel worshipping the golden calf? Notice what Moses said and did the following day as we read from Exodus chapter 32,

"30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

31 And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33 And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

So we see that Moses also was willing to lay down his life for his brethren, and he too, pushed it a little farther by willing to give up his eternal life. Here are 2 men that I know for sure that knew the love of Christ, Paul and Moses, but there are plenty others.

From all these scriptures we see that a man that knows the love of Christ, loves his enemies, blesses them that curse him, does good to them that hate him, prays for them that spitefully use and persecute him, is willing to take wrong for his brethren and is willing to lay down his life for his brethren.

Question: What about you? Do you do these things? Are you willing to take wrong for your brethren? Are you willing to lay down your life for your brethren?

As we stated before, you don't learn these things from reading scripture. God grants it unto you by his Holy Spirit. For a man to be willing to lay down his life for someone else, doesn't come from reading scripture, it comes from serving the Lord.

Now this is what was revealed unto the apostle Paul when he got to Rome: that we could know the love of Christ and that this was God's eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing complicated, kind of simple really.

In 1st John 4:16 it says,

"...God is love..."

The Father wants us to be like him, he wants us to know the love of Christ, to have the same love that Christ has.

This is God's eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**“...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved...”**

Acts 16:31