



May 27, 2018

God's Purpose. God's Call. God's Power

READ: Isaiah 55:11 (Common English Bible)

"...so is my word that comes from my mouth; it does not return to me empty. Instead, it does what I want, and accomplishes what I intend."

REFLECT:

Reading the Bible, with a fresh and alert mind, impacts and stirs the reader in extraordinary and often unanticipated ways. Because the printed words belong to a real, present, and active God, the words are used imaginatively and purposefully, in a tailored fashion, for each individual reader. Reading the Bible is never a solo activity. God, in the Holy Spirit, is always present, accomplishing a purposeful work in the mind and heart of the individual who comes expectant to experience something new. When the mind is dull and expects little from reading the Bible, this dynamic and amazing power is absent. In my own engagement with the Bible each morning, I experience three reoccurring themes.

First, the Bible reveals the purposefulness of God. Perhaps in no other place in scripture is this more clearly and directly presented than in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, verses 1-3: God promises to bless Abraham. But, with penetrating clarity, this blessing is ultimately for the purpose of blessing all of humanity. A blessing to all people, of all nations, is the bottom line of God's promise to Abraham. God's unfolding purpose may be too vast and, at times, imperceptible, to be grasped this side of the grave, but, at least, we are assured by the Bible that the world has been delivered from meaninglessness. With this knowledge, we can live quietly and confidently, trusting the care of the future to God.

Second, the Bible reveals God's call upon each person. Assuming a robust theological posture, the Apostle Paul declares in Ephesians 2:10 that we were, "...created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives." Candidly, Paul corrects the notion that followers of Jesus Christ are to participate, here and there, in good work. No; good work, or doing good things, is to be our way of life. It is all part of God's divine activity that our own lives be caught-up in the one grand purpose that God is continually unfolding in the world. Each person's life is made integral to God's resolve to gather the nations under the Lordship of his son, Jesus Christ.

Third, the Bible reveals God's power. God is not defeated. With panoramic vision, Paul captures the human condition in Romans 8: "Who will separate us from Christ's love? Will we be separated by trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, we are being put to death all day long for your sake. We are treated like sheep for slaughter. But in all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us." (Verses 35-37 CEB) Contrary to appearances, difficulties, hardships, and death will not defeat God and those who belong to God. Struggle will certainly manifest itself in every life. But at the end we will discover that our life has been guided and loved, and that disaster is over-ruled. More, we will find that nothing of value is lost.

