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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

July 24, 2016

The Power of Purpose

*"I'm doing important work, so I can't come down."*  
Nehemiah 6:3 (Common English Bible)

The absence of success isn't the great malady of our time; it is the absence of purpose. Millions of men and women push through each day eking out a living with no large meaning or compelling purpose in life to inspire them. Each day they are going and going but are not moving toward anything. Without direction or motivation these people find their lives flattened, living lives that are meaningless and without a center that strengthens both physically and emotionally. Life is little more than some sort of dreary treadmill; the result being that powers are depleted and personal existence seemingly pointless. These are people who will say that, more than comfort or security, what they crave most of all is meaning in their lives.

Nehemiah found the answer to aimlessness, "I'm doing important work, so I can't come down." Nehemiah put his hand out to a task that God wanted done and no distraction or discouragement would pull him away from that work. Naturally, Nehemiah's first task was to properly discern what it was that God wanted from him. The exercise of discovering God's purpose for us is commonly called, spiritual formation. It need not be a complicated process, but it does require a determination of the heart and a regular time commitment. At the minimum, what is necessary is the regular reading of the Bible and the prayer, "What would you have me hear from these words and what would you have me to do?"

This is a large message of the New Testament; that salvation is, in part, being delivered from aimlessness and finding our lives organized around the creative purposes of God. Attention to God's voice in the Bible gathers the scattered forces of our being and links them to the one divine force at work in the world. Anyone who has spent considerable time with God in this manner discovers that their loyalties are shaped and a grand purpose in life emerges. Day then follows day with a deep sense of meaning running through each of them because these people finally discover that they are moving steadily toward something worth getting to.

When people say that they are going to pieces, often they are speaking the literal truth. Life has a tendency to crumble into pieces when a centering purpose is absent. What is deeply needed is some master passion, some supreme devotion that will hold our scattered selves together. That is the enormous contribution that Christ makes in the world. Christ puts divine meaning into our daily human tasks and saves us from scattered, aimless living. Called to a great cause, a great enterprise worthy of our complete devotion, fractured lives are once again pulled together, physical energies restored, and we discover that we are caught-up in an important work. It is a work that recovers purpose and makes us whole.

Doug Hood