

**GOD'S PURPOSE (3)**

— J. van Dijk

So far we have not yet seen what the contents of God's purpose were: what God had in mind. Also this God shows us in His Word. Perhaps we see this best in Ephesians 1:8-11, "His grace, which He has caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in Him in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will."

Centered in these verses we find God's purpose, God's will. The will of God is completely inscrutable to man. What creature could be able to enter into the thoughts and intents of his Creator? How completely impossible for man to know the least of what motivates God. Yes, His will is forever a mystery..., unless God from His side opens up His storehouse of grace. This, God has done, and it was not a small thing for Him to do so. Even if man had been without sin, even if there had been perfect harmony between God and man, the revelation of God's will to His creatures would have been an act full of grace. How much more is it so, now that man had to be purchased by the blood of His Son? (Acts 20:28). What abounding grace! God in His wisdom and intelligence graciously made known to us, who have received life in Christ, the mystery of His will.

But then we read more, we read that the content of His purpose agrees with His good pleasure. God's purpose concerned things He delighted in, that were a joy for His heart. It concerned things which will find their fulfillment in the administration of the fulness of times. God's purpose had the end in view from the very beginning. He is the One who knows the end from the beginning.

But still we have not spoken of the actual content of God's purpose. The next clause informs us of this. "To head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth." Here we have God's unchangeable purpose, the good pleasure of His will, His delight. It is God's delight to see Christ honoured as Head. To this end God took counsel and formed His plan. Ultimately Christ would be seen as Head in two distinct, although connected spheres: heaven and earth.

But we also read of other thoughts, related thoughts of God before the foundation of the world. First of all Ephesians 1:4 says that God "has chosen us in Him before the world's foundation." Then in 2 Timothy 1:9 we read of the grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time. And Titus 1:2 declares that before the ages of time God promised the hope of eternal life. This last verse might at first thought present a problem, which however, when read carefully, is not too great. For a promise to be given there must be a giver and a receiver. So before the ages of time God promised the Lord Jesus the hope of eternal life. We know that the Lord Jesus is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20). This establishes that there is no room for the thought as if God would have promised to give eternal life to the Lord Jesus. The promise was to Him but it concerned a gift to be made to others. And we know to whom He gives eternal life. 1 John 5:11 clearly shows us that He gave *us* eternal life. To be suited companions of the Lord Jesus, companions He could call brethren, we had to share His life; He had to be our life (Colossians 3:4). Only in this way could we be in His presence in the Father's house (John 14:2).

We have seen how the creature has a place in God's thoughts concerning Christ. Ephesians repeatedly says: "in Him." God presents our election as a matter bound up entirely in His thoughts about His beloved Son. When God purposed His plans about Christ Jesus, there was integrally bound up with it grace towards us (2 Timothy 1:9). And when His counsels in Christ were established they contained the remarkable promise to His Son of eternal life for creatures such as us.

This in turn leads us to consider for a moment the character of those called according to God's purpose (Romans 8:28); the called saints (Romans 1:7). In Romans 8:29-30 we find the words *foreknown* and *predestinated*. God reveals here, that He foreknew the ones He has called. The same thought we find in 1 Peter 1:2 which says, "to the... elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit." Both verses show us the tremendous fact, that God in that pre-creation presence knew whom He was going to call (see also Ephesians 1:4). And then we read that God had His pre-determined purpose for those so known. That purpose was that they should be conformed to the image of His Son. Important as this is, it is not an end in itself. The centre of God's thoughts is always Christ. "All things have been created... for Him." "For

of Him and through Him and for Him are all things" (Colossians 1:16; Romans 11:36). They should be conformed to Christ so that: "He should be the *firstborn among many brethren*." No wonder then that we saw earlier that they are to receive His (eternal) life, yes, Himself as their life, for only so are they fit to be called His brethren.

*To be cont'd.*

## **THE OFFERINGS (10)**

— H. L. Heijkoop

*Leviticus 1:10-17*

In the foregoing we have seen the service we may perform each Sunday morning: we approach the Father to express to Him what we have discovered of the perfection of the Lord Jesus and His work. And from Leviticus 2 we saw that in our worship we may also bring the perfection of His Person displayed during His life upon earth as presented in the meat-offering. But here we have the burnt-offering which shows us the Lord Jesus in His work upon the cross, not as it concerns *our* interests, but those on *God's* side, namely how God has been glorified in it.

We also have seen that God now expects His people to desire to bring Him a sacrifice; that His people will utilize the riches that He has given them to bring Him a great sacrifice of the glory of the Lord Jesus displayed upon the cross. God has given us His Word which is filled with these glories so that every believer can be rich in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and His work. Therefore, as I have already mentioned, God expects everyone to come and bring a great sacrifice, a young bullock. Finally we saw that God gives directions to us to enable us to see more and more of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

But our God is full of grace. When we are not what we ought to be, not as rich as we should be in the knowledge of the Person and the work of the Lord, then we cannot bring a perfect sacrifice. But then God says, "Bring what you can; if it cannot be a young bullock, then bring Me a burnt-offering of the flock, of the sheep or the goats." In this we discover a difference between the burnt-offering and the sin-offering. Normally one who had to bring a sin-offering was not given any choice: his offering was clearly prescribed. However when it concerns an expression of what is found in our hearts, the worship due to God, we may bring what proceeds from the riches that we possess.

For us who have known the Lord Jesus for quite some time, there is no excuse as far as our responsibility is concerned if we do not bring a young bullock. We possess the entire Word of God and we have all received the Holy Spirit Who enables us to search and understand the Word. If all of us used our time studying the Scriptures to find in them the special glories of the Lord Jesus, all of us would be rich and be able to bring to God the Father a great sacrifice. I fear however that all of us must admit that we have not taken sufficient time for this.

What wonderful grace when God says here, "If you cannot bring Me a burnt-offering of the cattle, then bring Me a sheep or a goat." What great grace this is towards these young believers who have not had the time to enrich themselves in this way. God says to them, "if you have not yet been able to lay hold of this wealth, you may bring Me what you do have, as long as it speaks of the Lord Jesus and of the glorious work He finished, and in particularly of the significance of that work to Me. Bring it to Me!" And at the end of verse 13 we find the same words as in verse 9, "it is a burnt-offering, an offering by fire to Jehovah of a sweet odour." And verse 17 ends the same way: there we find someone so poor, that he can only bring turtle-doves or young pigeons. Yet even these spoke of the Lord Jesus and they were "an offering by fire to Jehovah of a sweet savour."

Now we could ask, is there no difference in these three offerings? There is no difference when we apply them to ourselves. As soon as a man has confessed his sins before God, he is born-again, converted, and as soon as he believes the entire Gospel he has peace with God and is sealed with the Holy Spirit. The entire work of the Lord Jesus is put to the new believer's account, and whether or not he understands it does not make any difference. From that very moment God sees him in the Beloved, in all His glories and riches. So when someone is spiritually poor, so that he is not able to bring a young bullock, it changes nothing in his position before God, *but it makes a big difference in his knowledge of his position.*

Not so long ago I spoke with a young woman who had a rich father, but she had never known it. Her father was a major shareholder of a large factory; she however thought that he was a labourer there. So she belonged to a very rich family, but she didn't know it. Often believers are in a similar situation. Each child of God is rich beyond description, all the glories of the Lord Jesus are put to his account; God loves him as He loves the Lord Jesus. Many however do not know this and are poor in

their feelings. How can that be? It is simply because they are occupied with themselves rather than with the Lord. They only think of the things that concern themselves in the work of the Lord Jesus, the things presented in the sin-offering, namely that He bore their sins in His body upon the tree and that He had been made sin for them.

It is glorious to know that there is no judgment left for us. But many believers do not go any further. God says that He put everything that the Lord Jesus has accomplished to our account. To understand the extent and depth of this, I must know it for myself. So I must study the work of the Lord Jesus to see how God has been glorified thereby and what the tremendous results of that work are. That is the only way for me to learn what has been out to my account. When I think that God gave the Lord Jesus, as Man, all things that He already possessed as the eternal Son of God, I begin to understand a little of what has become my portion. For this reason those who are little occupied with the Lord Jesus as the burnt-offering, know little of their own wealth. This is the thought here.

Now we see someone who brings a sheep or a goat of the flock. A lamb is a picture of the Lord Jesus. In Isaiah 53:7 we read how the Lord Jesus was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and the continual burnt-offering was a lamb (Exodus 29:38-46). But a lamb does not speak of the most exalted side of the work of the Lord. In the young bullock we find the expression of the spiritual energy. From 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 we know the oxen to typify the service. Upon the cross we see the spiritual strength displayed by the Lord Jesus: He was obedient unto death, the death upon the cross. He had only one goal in mind: to glorify God and He did this perfectly. A lamb, however, speaks more of meekness, giving a beautiful display of the Lord Jesus, but it does not present to us the positive will power of the young bullock. So the lamb is a lesser offering than is the young bullock.

The burnt-offering could also be of the goats although normally the goat speaks of the sin-offering. From this we see that the one who brought the sacrifice was more occupied with what the Lord Jesus had done for him.

If we now pay attention to the *manner* in which the lesser offering had to be brought, we also discover great differences. In verses 10-17 we do not have all the details of. The first verses, nor do we find here what we read at the end of verse 3, "At the entrance of the tent of meeting shall he present it, for His acceptance before Jehovah." There is no explicit mention, of bringing the burnt-offering before God neither is there mention of the place where God invited the offerer to come to Him nor about the fact that the sacrifice was for "his acceptance." These omissions show that the one who brings this offering does not appreciate to the same degree the favour in which He stands before God.

Then, we also miss here what is mentioned in verse 4, "And he lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." We saw that this signified the making himself one with the burnt offering; he who sacrificed a young bullock as a burnt-offering knew that he was "one" with the Lord Jesus. But we do not read of this in connection with the one who came to offer a lamb. Certainly, in application, he saw something of the glory of the Lord Jesus, but he was not so deeply aware of the fact that all these glories were put on his account nor did he understand clearly that he was covered with these glories. He did not see what Ephesians 1 speaks of, "He has taken us into favour in the Beloved." Isn't this the reason why most believers are unhappy? They are occupied with themselves, but in themselves they find nothing good. They think of the way in which they bring the truth into practice, and that is always sad. When we know that in ourselves no good dwells, we cannot expect anything good from ourselves.

Obviously then, when we are filled with ourselves, it will always be a sad state of affairs because we think that God sees us that way. However, the one who understands that he is one with the Lord Jesus and blessed with all the glories of His work upon the cross, knows that God sees him as being in Christ, so that God no longer sees the old man, but only the Lord. We may know that we are in Him, clothed with Him, as we have seen when we spoke of the skin of the burnt-offering. God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of slain animals; God saw them so clothed when He looked at them.

The young bullock had to be skinned and in chapter 7:8 we see that the priest received that skin. Normally the priest was found in God's presence to serve Him, and he knew that God saw him clothed with the perfection of the burnt offering. But we do not find this at all in the case of the lamb. The one who offered a lamb *is clothed* with the glory of the Lord Jesus: *God* sees him just as much that way as He sees someone who brings a young bullock, but *he himself* does not know that. It is not mentioned here that he skinned the lamb; the thought of this did not even enter his mind.

We find yet another difference in the next verse, "And he shall cut it into its pieces, and its head, and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar" (v. 12). Here we have the *priest*, but in verse 7 *Aaron's sons, the priests*. There the connection of the priests with Aaron was accentuated. Aaron is a type of the Lord Jesus

and every believer can be a son of Aaron, and every son of Aaron may perform the service. But in verse 12 only the priest is mentioned.

We also miss here what is said in verse 7, "and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay wood in order on the fire." This detail is missing in our present portion. The man who brought the burnt-offering was not sufficiently rich to understand those details. Nevertheless the end result is that the priest can offer the entire sacrifice and cause it to go up in smoke upon the altar, "It is a burnt-offering, an offering by fire to Jehovah of a sweet savour." Once more: everyone who speaks about the Lord Jesus as the burnt-offering is acceptable before God; all that speaks of the Lord Jesus is pleasing God, and God accepts it. But the person himself who brought a lamb for a burnt-offering was not so much aware of those things as the one who offered the young bullock.

In verse 14 we find an even smaller sacrifice for very poor people to offer; they could not even afford a sheep or a goat, only turtle-doves or young pigeons. In these we also have a type of the Lord Jesus. Leviticus 14 clearly shows what is essential here: the Lord Jesus as the One Who descended from heaven. It accentuates the fact that He has come from heaven; that He Who died upon the cross was the Son of God, and this in itself is a tremendous thought. Every born-again person, even the youngest believer, knows that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. Anyone who does not believe this has not been born-again, for even the poorest believer can know this. But even this tremendous thought is less than the offering of the young bullock.

What is the great mystery of the Person of the Lord Jesus? It is that He is God and Man in one and the same Person. He was and is the eternal God, and at the same time He is truly Man. This is the great mystery: the little Babe in the manger was the Creator of heaven and earth, maintaining all things at that very moment by the Word of His power. And yet He was at the same time a Babe, completely dependent upon Mary's cares, not just apparently so, but in reality. In Luke 2:52 it says that He advanced in wisdom, yet He is Wisdom!

Once a brother said, it just seemed that He advanced in wisdom. Another brother replied, did it also just seem as if He advanced in stature? No, He truly advanced in wisdom and yet, He was Wisdom. Here we have a deficiency that is quite common among spiritually poor believers. They are all convinced that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, yet they do not see that He at the same time is truly Man. Here this thought is displayed to us.

In these details we see how weak and poor the believer is who only brings a bird: he does very little: the priest does everything. "And the priest shall bring it near to the altar and pinch off its head and burn it on the altar; and its blood shall be pressed out at the side of the altar" (v. 15). Here we do not find that the blood is sprinkled around the altar for the turtle-dove does not have sufficient blood to sprinkle it. The picture is of a weak believer who knows that he has been washed in the blood, but he has little knowledge and understanding of the whole value of the blood of the Lord Jesus. The priest has to *press out* the blood: he had to work hard to obtain a little bit of blood.

Naturally there is no mention here of skinning the bird. Nor is the thought expressed of being clothed with Christ's glory. But more serious than that: in verse 16 there is mention of a part that God could not accept as sacrifice. "He shall remove its crop with its feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east, into the place of the ashes." This causes us to think of the sin-offering: the sin-offering was not to be brought upon the altar. Here we also find a part that was not allowed to be offered; this sacrifice is thus just above a sin-offering which was not an offering for a sweet-smelling savour to God.

Don't we see here a practical side for the Lord's Day morning meeting? We recognize that we meet for the breaking of bread and for worship at the Lord's Table, but frequently there is no worship but rather praise and giving of thanks. Giving of thanks is not worship, but expressing thankfulness for what we have received, *whereas worship expresses what we have found in the Son*. The distinction we see here. Do we come to the Father to bring Him what we have found in the Son? That is the highest characteristic our Sunday meeting can have. The Lord says in John 4:23, "For the Father seeks such as His worshippers": that is to say, children who come to the Father bringing Him what they have seen and found in the Lord Jesus. In this turtle-dove or pigeon sacrifice very little of this is found.

To see this, note the beginning of verse 17, "He shall split it open at its wings, but shall not divide it asunder." Expression is given to the fact that the Lord Jesus humbled Himself, occupying a place of humility and dependency upon earth, but we do not find here that the sacrifice is divided in its pieces. There is a general impression of the work of the Lord, but the heart is not occupied with the details of it, nor with His love, or with the greatness of His holiness, righteousness and wisdom. He who brought the sacrifice did not know all these details of the Lord Jesus: he had only a general impression of the perfectness of the Lord and failed to occupy himself with the details which God longs to give to us.

The Word of God gives these details to us that we might search them and give them a place in our hearts. Doing this will enable us to have fellowship with the Father and to return the thoughts of our hearts to Him as a sacrifice because of what we have become in Christ.

In summary, the verses we have been studying deal with the *energy of faith* of the one who brings the burnt-offering, and we see that the one who is spiritually poor misses much. But this has only to do with the *knowledge* and the *joy he receives* of all these things. *God sees the spiritually poorest believer in the same position as the most wealthy*: the one as much as the other is accepted in the Beloved, and there cannot possibly be more, for all depends on this.

But even with the turtle-dove or pigeon there is the display of God's wonderful grace! "And the priest shall burn it on the altar on the wood that is on the fire: it is a burnt-offering, an offering by fire to Jehovah of a sweet odour" (v. 17). These are the same words as were used for the lamb and the young bullock. That is God's grace. When a poor one is occupied with the Lord, being able to bring only a pair of turtle-doves, yet looking at them and seeing what the priest does with them — he himself is not able to do it, but the priest who is always in God's presence, knows what he has to do with the little available — would it not tend to enrich the poor one so that he will soon be led to bring a "lamb" and subsequently a "young bullock"? That would be the practical outcome of it.

What a glorious, beautiful service we have: how the Lord has provided for everything! A young believer may enter the assembly and, having only contemplated a little about the Lord Jesus, there is perhaps in his heart only "a pair of turtle-doves." But in the meeting are priests! With this I do not only refer to some brother who expresses a prayer as the mouthpiece of the assembly, their heart being in agreement with what he says. True, if he is led by the Holy Spirit he will express what is found in the hearts of all and the Holy Spirit will use him to give expression of this. No, I refer to priests given by God, those who are habitually in God's presence, who have learned to see everything with the eyes of God and to understand all the perfections of Christ. These might be brothers, but also sisters. They may make use of what this poor brother brings and present it to God in a manner that is pleasing to Him. And when, for instance, a brother performs the service as the mouthpiece of the assembly (thereby giving expression through the Holy Spirit to what is presented in the heart of the poor one in a way acceptable to God, without "the crop with its feathers)," then we see there the wonder of the Holy Spirit's leading. He can lead all things and bring about a perfect expression of what rises from the heart of all. This way the burnt-offering becomes "an offering by fire to Jehovah of a sweet odour."

*To be cont'd.*

## **HE IS ABLE (2)**

— R. K. Campbell

We have previously seen that God is able, in the manner in which He kept the three young men in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. The same book of Daniel gives us also the account of the experience of Daniel in the reign of Darius later on — of how he was cast into the lion's den because he continued to pray only to Jehovah God. After a sleepless night, the king came early in the morning to the den of lions and "cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel... O Daniel, servant of the living God, *is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?*" Darius had to ask whether Daniel's God was able to deliver him from the hungry lions, though it seemed he rather expected that He would and had said previously to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Well, the king received the reply from Daniel in the den that "My God has sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: for as much as before him innocency was found in me" (Daniel 6:16, 18-22).

Another encouraging passage as to God being able is found in 2 Corinthians 9:8. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." This promise is given in connection with giving. The words preceding this verse are "For God loveth a cheerful giver." As we give of ourselves and of our material things to the Lord and His interests, we are assured that God is able to make *all grace* abound towards us, that we might *always* have *all sufficiency in all things* and be able to abound to *every* good work. Notice the all's; it is *all grace for all times*, with *all sufficiency in all things* for every or *all good works*.

As we give to God, He gives to us. If we have an open hand of giving, God can fill our hands with His abundance, but if we are "tight-fisted" God can't put anything in our closed hands. A Kansas wheat Christian used to say that as he shoveled it out to others, God shoveled it in to him and he testified that God had the biggest shovel, meaning of course, that he received more from God than he gave out to others.

Then we have that grand and marvelous expression in the prayer of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto Him that is *able to do exceeding abundantly* above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Yes, our God is able to do for us far beyond that we can ask or think according to the power of the Holy Spirit that works in us. Notice, Paul says, God can do exceeding abundantly above our desires and requests. Do we believe this as to God's ability and willingness to bless us? Paul's prayer for the Ephesian saints was especially for a large spiritual comprehension of the love of God and Christ and that they might be filled with all fulness of God. It is in this connection that he says, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

At the end of the Apostle Paul's life in his last epistle to Timothy, he wrote: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that *he is able to keep* that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). Long ago he had committed the salvation of his soul to Christ and had experienced God's delivering power through many trials, sufferings and persecutions from the enemies of his Lord and Master. Now as he knew his martyrdom was near, that his course of arduous and diligent labors for the Saviour was finished, he had the firm persuasion that the One he had believed and trusted in was able to keep all the planting of assemblies and communication of divine revelations. In calm confidence he committed everything to the Lord for the day of glory, believing that He was able to keep everything.

How encouraging to review and consider these Scriptures that speak of all that our Saviour God is able to do. May we trust more implicitly, in confiding faith, in Him who is able to touch our lives with His power, to sustain us in trial, to save us to the uttermost glory and *is able to keep all we commit* to His keeping.

*The End*