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Eph 3:11-12
Knowing What God has Finished

It's been a couple weeks since I've shared, but we're going to start by picking right up where we left off in Ephesians chapter 3 verses 11 and 12. We spent four weeks talking about the temple or habitation of God from the previous several chapters. We spent three of those weeks looking at the eternal purpose of God to have what Scriptures calls "One New Man" – a corporate Son. Christ being the life, the head, the source. We being His body who operate as His dwelling place and the vessel for His increase and expression. And then the last time I shared we discussed an even greater view of this reality as Jesus describes it – "I am in the Father, you are in Me, and I am in you". Or as Paul says "you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God".

I'm tempted to just rehash that for our time together this morning because there is nothing bigger. In these short sentences you have the eternal purpose and desire of God summed up. You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. You could spend the remainder of your life in the spiritual discovery this one sentence and it would be an incredibly good use of your time. All that it means to have died with Him, to be hidden with Him, to have returned with Him to His Father.

And this is exactly what the cross accomplished. You'll notice that Paul does not say "you will die, and your life will be hidden with Christ in God". What Jesus and Paul describe is finished by the cross. This is the eternal purpose of God. In the cross, God has found a dwelling place among men. More than that, God has found a dwelling place IN man. A body of which He is the head and the life. A kingdom where He reigns as king. A city where He is the foundation, the light, the wall, the glory. God, in Christ, has tabernacled among men. He has raised up, through His death, burial, and resurrection, the true sanctuary of God. I'm just borrowing several Biblical ways of describing one reality. He has brought a people to Himself in His Son. This has been the plan and purpose from the beginning. This is what God has completed, accomplished, fulfilled in Christ. And this is what the New Testament declares in a multitude of ways to be NOW in Christ.

This is the verse we are looking at today: Ephesians 3:11 tells us that all of this was "according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And nowhere do you see this promised and described more fully than in the tabernacle – which was the centerpiece of the Old Covenant. We were talking about this in the Hebrews study on Saturday morning from Hebrews chapter 8, and it was really exciting me. God says "Moses, build me a tabernacle that I might dwell in the midst of this people". A powerful statement of divine purpose. And in this tabernacle you see the way, the truth, and the life portrayed in the three sections. You see heaven and earth come together in one man called the High Priest. You see this man, the high priest, preparing the way through death, and bringing a people in Himself, in spotless linen, behind the veil into the very glory of God. A people living in one man behind the veil in the presence of God. "I am in you Father, they are in

Me, and I am in them". You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Jesus says to the Pharisees "destroy this earthly shadow, and I will raise up the real thing in just three days." And so He does.

And so our verse in Ephesians says that the eternal purpose of God **has been accomplished** in Christ. The eternal purpose of God IS ACCOMPLISHED. That's what this verse is saying. Maybe we don't pause here long enough to notice this. God has what He wants. He has what He set out for. He completed His objective, finished His plan, fulfilled everything He purposed.

I believe if you have a KJV your Bible might read "according to the eternal purpose which He *purposed* in Christ Jesus our Lord", but that is a gross mistranslation. The Greek is the aorist tense of the verb "to do"...meaning "done". It is done, finished, accomplished. I believe the only reason that it is sometimes translated "purposed" instead of "accomplished" or "finished", is because the word "purposed" intentionally leaves God's plan unfinished, and that is how we generally think of the plan of God. He started it, it awaits finishing. He planned it, it awaits consummation. Jesus got most of the hard work done, but one day he'll wrap it all up.

This verse says quite the opposite. This verse tells us that God's eternal purpose was accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. And this chapter tells us twice that we are suppose to become the manifestation or the exhibition of what God has finished.

And we talk about the cross as God's finished work all the time. But the reason I do that is because in so many ways we really don't believe it. **So many of our thoughts about God, and life, and growth, and purpose, and destiny, and fulfillment somehow have to do with a natural day coming on a calendar rather than a spiritual day dawning in our hearts.**

But God is not dealing with you, or anyone, according to time, or days, or minutes. What I mean is that there is nothing of Christ or salvation that is going to be given to you separate than or independent of the Jesus who is salvation living in your soul. **God isn't "about to do" anything, other than show you what He's already done.** And you'll never find the Scriptures declaring Christ, in His death, burial, and resurrection having completed only part of the plan of God. You can infer that if you misunderstand certain passages. But it is never stated, because it is not true.

The day that we really need to walk in is not a day measured by a clock or a calendar, but the eternal day that Christ is. The rest that we come to know is not a place in the future but a Person who is now. He is the day of rest, the day of true light, the day that dawned in the resurrection. This day, forever finished by God, is perpetually NOW and remains always for anyone who desires to enter therein.

Heb 4:7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "TODAY," after such a long time, as it has been said: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." **8** For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. **9** There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. **10** For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. **11** Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

And this is the case regardless of what eschatological views you might ascribe to. If eschatology is an unfamiliar word to you, it just means "the study of the last days, or

the end times". But it doesn't matter what eschatological position you adopt, God's purpose has been completed in Christ.

You can be a full-preterist, a partial preterist, pre-trib, mid-trib, pre-mil, post trib, a-mil, no mil, pre-wrath, one rapture, two raptures, spiritual rapture, no rapture...and the list gets longer every year. But all of these things have to do with events that may or may not be manifested in the natural creation. None of them accomplish the eternal purpose of God. Perhaps, some of them might manifest the completed purpose of God. But none of them accomplish God's ultimate intention. Can you hear what I'm saying?

For instance, God's ultimate intention was not destroying Old Covenant Israel. God did destroy Old Covenant Israel by Titus, the son of Caesar, in 70AD, and there are Scriptures that talk about it. But this destruction was nothing more than a natural manifestation of a judgment He accomplished at the cross. In other words, God put the Old Covenant away with all of its types and shadows in the death of His Son. It is there that the old sacrifices, feasts, offerings, instruments, priesthood, dietary laws, etc. were rendered obsolete. His people, for the most part, would not receive in Christ the end of these things and so He manifested that end in the earth. But His goal, His end-game, His purpose was accomplished in Christ, and manifested in the outward destruction of Old Covenant Israel.

God's ultimate intention is not blowing up planet earth. If God does blow up planet earth, that doesn't accomplish His purpose, though it might manifest a judgment that He already accomplished in the cross. A judgment that forever separated the old man and the old creation from Himself.

I don't want to get too deep into that stuff today. My point is that in no natural event, future or past, is the eternal purpose of God completed. And, I might ask you, while the constant pursuit of these things might be fascinating to the mind, what is it really accomplishing? Lets just say that your opinions happen to be correct. At what point in your walk as a Christian have your opinions, your thoughts, about future or past events ever changed your soul into the image of Christ, or done anything except give you something interesting to think about?

I don't spend much time talking about the various raging debates and soul thrilling ideas. I don't think God is ever going to say about you or I "well, there was a very small measure of Christ working in them, they didn't walk in the Truth, they grew very little in faith, they expressed very little of my Son, but you know what?....they really nailed down the sequence of end-times events."

God's ultimate intention has nothing to do with natural events – with the exception of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You'll never see God's ultimate intention with natural eyes. Natural eyes are only good for seeing the natural things, and shadows of spiritual reality. Don't take your eyeballs too seriously. They'll never see what you're really looking for. God's ultimate intention has to do with a people judged in the death of His Son, joined in spirit to the resurrected Christ, brought together as a city of righteousness, a temple of glory, an eternal habitation. And all of this is finished, accomplished, completed in Christ.

And it seems like many Christians would probably agree mentally or verbally if they were asked if God's purpose was accomplished in Christ. But there are hundreds of ways that our actions, theologies, teachings, fears, condemnation, ambition, goals,

lives speak loudly to the contrary. Not understanding God's eternal purpose finished in Christ and revealed by the Spirit, the burden has fallen on ourselves in countless unspoken ways to finish it, find it, keep from missing it. And then spiritual growth becomes our own imagination of what we think it means to do what He wants, find the center of His will, obey his plan, accomplish his purpose, walk into our destiny, do our part in finishing His eternal purpose. And all while His purpose, His plan, His ultimate intention is accomplished, not in you, but in Christ Jesus the Lord. It is there already established and perfected by Him, and ready to be revealed and realized by you.

What is spiritual growth then? Spiritual growth is when your spiritual understanding catches up with His finished work. In other words, growth is the process of faith catching up with reality, light showing you where you are, the Spirit of truth revealing the Son in Whom you now live, light catching up with life. Spiritual growth is where the reality of God's finished salvation becomes the reality that identifies and motivates and moves you in all things. The life that is in you working in you through faith.

And that is actually the next verse in Ephesians 3. "**Eph 3:12** in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." It is by faith, the spiritual knowing and seeing of Christ, that our salvation is accessed and experienced. And I've talked about faith accessing the grace in which we stand. I've talked about faith, the mind of the Lord, spiritual apprehension, man times. I'd rather take this in another direction this morning.

As I was reading these verses for today, I realized I could take them in just about any direction. For Paul to say that the eternal purpose of God is finished in Christ leaves me with the ability to make application in any number of ways. But there has been one thing that kept coming to my heart in the last few days, and I want to go there for the rest of our time together. It has to do with turning to the Lord to see what He has accomplished, or subtly refusing to see it. Turning to the Lord to see what is finished. Turning to the Lord to see His salvation, or keeping our heart mostly fixed on the earth. As I read this verse in Ephesians 3 about God's accomplished purpose, the thing that I kept thinking to myself is "do I want to know it?", "will I let Him show it to me"?

I know what you're thinking. I come back to this with you a time or two every year, and often its after the holidays when I've watched the natural realm of shadows dress up and sparkle and sing and make its best attempt to convince us that there is something of substance there. I know I come back to it often with you...but if you only knew how many times I come back to it in my heart. No matter how far I go in this its almost always like I'm always staring at a fork in the road. Not a choice to go back to dead Christian religion, but a question of what I want to do from here. And Its not like I hear God literally asking the question, its just that I'm aware of the question. Its like I'm staring at the question.

What's the question? The question of whether or not I will continue leaning into the truth, turning my heart towards the truth and away from all else. People that automatically assume that the answer is yes, I'm afraid haven't yet really faced the question I'm referring to. There is no way the heart of man can automatically answer yes to what I'm talking about.

But again and again this question resurfaces. You think you've answered it once and for all, and then it resurfaces again. Its never going to go away. You see a greater view of Christ, you see by a greater light, and there it is again. Will you let the Spirit reveal in you the finished work of God. Will you turn your heart to know what God has completed through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Will you forget all else and come to know Him in this way. Know Him in His death, be conformed to that death, walk in and by the resurrection? Will you fight the fight of faith? Will you finish this race?

Incidentally, when Paul said, from prison at the end of His life, that that He had fought the good fight of faith and finished the race, he most certainly did not mean that he had managed to remain a Christian until He died. He meant something far more than that. The fight of faith is a constant journey into the truth, a walk in and into the light. There are innumerable exit ramps and ways to slow down and get derailed in this great transition from one man to Another. Paul avoided them all. Paul fixed His eyes on Jesus, forgetting what lied behind, and never stopped moving forward.

And every time I come back and talk about this with you, (and its often the beginning of the year, for whatever reason) it may sound like it, but its not like I'm seeing the same thing. I know the words sound the same. Words are very limited. I have a very irritating relationship with words. The realities get deeper and deeper, while words stay the same. That may be the most frustrating thing that I experience as a teacher. As the reality of knowing Christ gets deeper and more real, the English vocabulary stays exactly the same. Webster only ever gives me the same limited number of choices. I can see something altogether new and mind-blowing and still have to chose from the same bucket of words. I find that difficult, and it often shuts my mouth.

Some people, I suppose remain silent because they have nothing to say. But some people remain silent because they have too much to say, and words fail. And when somebody like Paul, though an intellectual giant, says "I know nothing but Christ and Him crucified", and "God please give me utterance that I can make known the mystery of Christ", its sounds so unimpressive. And when he does speak, he says the same thing over and over in a hundred different ways.

And I know that it bores the carnal mind to tears, to hear of it again and again. I know that the proclamation of knowing Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection week after week can bore the natural mind almost to insanity. You don't have to tell me that. If you were planning on telling me, you can save your breath. Don't send the email. I've heard that from dozens, probably hundreds, of people already. I know I will always here it.

But once a heart has seen this one thing, you understand very quickly that there is nothing else to talk about. You understand almost immediately that knowledge is not a collective understanding of many things, but an ever increasing view of one thing. And you can't hear enough of it. Because in hearing it, you can turn to see more. In hearing it, faith comes. And faith becomes the substance of what you've always hoped for, and the evidence of what cannot be seen with eyes. Your view of Him increases, and you find in Him the treasures of all wisdom and knowledge. Its in the greater view of the One, that anything is learned. And there's nothing else to add to it.

You can't add so-called spiritual topics or spiritual things or spiritual activities to the knowing of Christ. You understand that all true spiritual activities flow out of knowing Him. And what you try to add to knowing Him, even if it is a disciplined prayer life, is only a work of the flesh. Can you hear that? If prayer doesn't flow out from knowing Him, a true praying in His name, as Mr. Luman says "you might as well be hollering at a tree".

Those are hard words, but those are true words. All things spiritual grow out from faith, or they are a weed in His garden. All things spiritual are the increase of Christ working in you, or they are the increase of you in His place.

These are hard words. They are terribly exclusive words. I know that. They are words that exclude everything but Christ. And that is why the Lord has to keep coming to you, every step of the way, and saying to your heart – can I show you more? Will you turn your heart? Can I show you your salvation? Do you want to see? And in every step of the way something is being seen of Him, and something is being lost of you. Something is being exalted of Christ, and something is being destroyed of you. One man put on, one man put off. Every step we go into this is another piece of us left behind. He appears unto our displacement.

I was recently talking to a man that I care very much about. I was trying to explain that Christianity was Christ, and that apart from Him it is just flesh. He said to me "Jason, how can you invalidate so many good things that have been done in Christ's name? How can you invalidate people that are incredibly committed to their beliefs, people that are very devoted to God and yet never talk about your message of the cross?" And the only thing I could say was "the cross invalidated me".

The question of whether I continue to walk forward with Him to see the Land of my inheritance, like with Abraham, involves in invalidation and necessarily leaving behind of so much. The question of whether I'm actually ok with forgetting what lies behind the cross, what God has made dead, and laying hold of what is before me. That's the question.

Its not a question of whether or not I want to be a Christian, or a pastor, or read my bible, or pray. It's a question of whether I want to know the reality of God's finished work and therefore more and more forget all else. Forget what lies behind. It's a question that has to do with whether I will turn my heart to the Lord.

I've been thinking about what it means to turn the heart to the Lord. Its quite a wonderful thing, really, but virtually impossible to describe. Its easier to talk about what its not than what it is. Its not the same thing as turning the mind, or the will, or the emotions. Its not the same thing as being curious or interested. Its not the same thing as being willing to read, or to learn. It's something more profound and deep and delicate and desperate than all of that.

Sometimes I see something that reminds me of it in the face of my daughter Willow when I wake her up from a nap. Willow just turned one, and sometimes takes long naps and we need to wake her up to leave the house. I go into her room and reach into her crib, and she rolls her head around and looks at us with this completely confused, blank look that says something like "I have no idea where I am, who I am, what time it is, who you are, what's going on, how I got here, or where I'm going. But I'm sure you'll help me. That's kindof how it feels when you turn your heart to the Lord.

I'm not trying to talk about two different things this morning. On the one hand I wanted to just state that the eternal purpose of God is completed in Christ. But then from that, I want to just suggest to you all that it is precisely this finished plan and reality that we resist seeing in favor of something of the earth, something of ourselves, something of religion, something familiar, safe, fun. In other words, we can turn our heart away from Him who is trying to show us where we are. Where are we? Where has the eternal plan and purpose of God brought us? Ephesians tells us. God has made us alive together, raised us together, and seated us together in the heavens in Christ Jesus.

Now Heb 12:25 "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven,

Gal 4:9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

God's eternal plan and purpose has us dead to the world and dwelling with Christ in the Father. Now that is true whether or not enough light has shone in your soul to see it. Our salvation has us dead to sin, dead to the old man, and crucified to the world. More than that, it has us alive in Christ, the resurrection and the Life, and dwelling in the Father's house. That's true. You can't read the Bible and deny these statements.

God would have us let Him show us where we are. He would teach us to see where we have been raised. He desires that we become the expression of what He has done to us in His Son, and as you know, this is impossible unless we know it. But, having been raised with Him, does our heart still turn downward. Do you hear what I mean? Having been catapulted out of the old creation, the old man, the old covenant, in the resurrection of His Son, where is the gaze of our soul? What are we looking at? To what have we turned? I submit to you that very few Christians let God speak to us from where we are.