**A Life of Purpose**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-4**

**Sunday Morning**

**August 5, 2018**

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-4 (The Living Bible)**

1 You yourselves know, dear brothers, how worthwhile that visit was. 2 You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet God gave us the courage to boldly repeat the same message to you, even though we were surrounded by enemies.

3 So you can see that we were not preaching with any false motives or evil purposes in mind; we were perfectly straightforward and sincere. 4 For we speak as messengers from God, trusted by him to tell the truth; we change his message not one bit to suit the taste of those who hear it; for we serve God alone, who examines our hearts' deepest thoughts.

**God allows us to go through difficult times because He loves us and has a great purpose for our lives.**

Clyde Thompson was the meanest man in Texas—until he started preaching, loving, and baptizing others. As a teenager, he was sentenced to death for killing two men. He became the youngest individual to be sentenced to the electric chair. A merciful governor rewrote his sentence to a lifetime behind bars rather than death.

Multiple attempts at escaping prison took the lives of his friends and the guards he used as human shields. His goal was to kill every guard in the prison.

When locked down in a literal pit of a cell, with no hope of escape, he would spit at the guards through the bars in the window. During that stay in a cell converted from an old morgue, he became one of the living dead—forgotten and alone.

He had no running water, no light, and no social connections. One day he asked for a Bible. Using the precious five hours of sunlight he was allowed each day, Clyde began reading eagerly. It converted him. He cried out to God for months. Soon he was converting guards. His conversion was as unlikely as that of the Philippian jailer.

When released from isolation, Clyde began teaching classes of eighty, baptizing many in the tub where death-row inmates bathed before execution. After twenty-eight years, Clyde was released and allowed to minister outside the prison.  **See Slide>**

Saints, strength, courage, and direction accompany A life of purpose. When difficulties arise, as they will in life, the understanding of one’s purpose rises to the occasion to guide through the troubled waters.

Purpose is the rock-solid foundation of life, the guiding light in darkness, the resolve to succeed, and the ability to continue the pursuit of excellence in any field of life, but especially in faith toward God.

**The Christian view of life can be defined in three areas: God-given, Defined, and Directed**

**1. Life is God-given**

All living things, including human life, come from God.

**Acts 17:24-25**

24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

Saints, God is the giver of life—the one who breathed life into Adam in the beginning.

**Genesis 2:7**

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being

**2. God Defines Life**

God determines the placement, bounds, and length of all life.

**Job 14:5**

“Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed”

**Acts 17:26**

“From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live”

Saints, where, when, and to whom a soul is born rests with God.

**3. God Directs the Affairs of Human Life**

God has a plan, purpose, and desired path to happiness in mind for every soul.

**Ecclesiastics 3:1**

“To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven”

**Jeremiah 29:11**

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope”

Saints, it is His desire that peace and pleasantness should prevail and none should perish.

**1. Suffering Often Comes to Those Who Preach the Gospel**

While great joy came to those who received the gospel, suffering came to those who preached it. Peter and the other apostles suffered much at the hands of the Jewish leaders. They were brought before the council, threatened, beaten, and cast into prison.

**Acts 5:40-42**

40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

**Acts 8:1-3**

1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

Though deliverance in some cases was miraculous, suffering continued to be a part of preaching the gospel. When the Lord spoke to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus, He said He would show Saul what great things he was to suffer for the name of Jesus.

**Acts 9:16**

“For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake”

**Unbelievers Will Oppose the Gospel**

In his list of sufferings in II Corinthians 11, Paul mentioned four specific groups who opposed him and the gospel: Jews, his own countrymen, the heathen, and false brethren.

**2 Corinthians 11:24-26**

24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

Some were religious, some were heathen, some were from the land where he was born, and finally, some were intermingled with the believers in the churches. The most difficult of the four to deal with is the false brethren. False brethren within are far more dangerous than the heathen without.

**We Seek to Please God, Not People**

Saints, because many signs and wonders accompanied the apostles, crowds gathered at Solomon’s porch to seek healing and to hear the apostles preach about Jesus. This angered the chief priests and the Sadducees. Therefore, they laid hands on the apostles and cast them into prison.

**Acts 5:12-18**

12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.

14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

But the angel of the Lord delivered them from the prison that night, instructing them, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:19–20).

**Acts 5:19-20**

19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

The next day the apostles were brought before the council the second time and reprimanded for preaching Jesus (Acts 5:28). Peter and the other apostles responded by saying,

**Acts 5:29**

“We ought to obey God rather than men”

Peter continued to testify of Jesus to the council, who became enraged and decided to kill the apostles.

**2. We Must Choose to Worship Even When Things Do Not Go Our Way**

Saints, Worship is what brings us into the presence of God. It is the act of giving glory, honor, and praise unto the Lord. It is love expressed of thoughts compressed. It sets things in order between the creature and the Creator.

It is a timeless principle of faith, a deliberate act of devotion, undeterred by circumstances or pressures of life. We choose to worship when all is well and also when things do not go our way.

**Paul and Silas in Jail**

Saints, Paul and Silas were on their way to the river to pray when they ended up in prison. (See Acts 16:16.)

**Acts 16:16-24**

16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; 21 and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

In prison there were no rippling river waters, no cool breeze, no sweet sound of other believers calling on the name of the Lord, no smell of stew cooking at Lydia’s house, no warm greeting of hospitality with a comfortable place of rest after prayer.

**3. Difficult Times Can Make Way for Great Miracles**

**Acts 16:25-34**

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

**In Closing:**

**4. God Has A Great Purpose for Us**

Saints, God has a purpose for every soul to whom the breath of life has been given. Roles in life can only partly fill that purpose. There needs to be an encounter with God, a seeking of His face to find that special purpose God has designed for you.

Paul and Silas found their purpose in the preaching of the gospel. Their place as missionaries was to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

**Acts 9:15**

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

Within that general purpose came a specific purpose—the calling to go into Macedonia.

**Acts 16:9**

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Their purpose was further defined with the prison experience in Philippi, which filtered down to the salvation of a man and his family. The work of the gospel is most often that of a one-on-one encounter with God. Every event we experience should be viewed as a guiding of God’s purpose in our lives to the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

**Let's Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace." '**