

Deuteronomy 32:29 (Herbert Chisholm Anstey) 141114

The Purpose of God: July 2014, Latter End, The (32:29)

“O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” (Deut. 32:29). In the life of a man of purpose everything takes its coloring from the end to be attained. And if this is so in the natural life, so surely should it be in the exercise of the divine life. Hope — that is, something beyond — is the spring of human life from the cradle to the grave, even when a man’s view is limited to this world. True hope has to do with God and His purpose.

In the daily life of a Christian, when the end to be attained is clearly seen, and God’s purpose is accepted by the soul, still, I think, we must learn it in a practical way along the way. Nature always resists God’s purpose for us, and we have to learn God’s estimate of it as the flesh. I think we shall find there is no other way to go on. God’s heart is set upon the end for me, and not on the necessary present process through which I am passing. He wants my heart to be set upon it too. Nothing diverts Him, and everything moves on in my circumstances, which He has arranged, toward the accomplishment of His purpose for me. Whatever may happen to me on the road, God’s heart has in view the end, where there shall be no flesh and no evil. He would have us now, as we thread our way along His path for us (the everyday circumstances of each human life), to be in communion with His mind about this. He would occupy us with what are His ultimate purposes and counsel respecting us.

When a poor sinner considers his “latter end” as a sinner, it must land him in the blackness and horror of despair. And it is just at this point that the gospel comes in with all its blessed and gloom-dispelling light. “God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6 JND). I see here that it is all settled, all finished for me, a poor guilty sinner. “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” And that glory which shines now, and which I see in the face of Jesus Christ, is God’s warrant and rest for my soul. “The true light now shines.” All is done. Thus the heart is set at rest as to the question of sins and judgment. But still I have to learn with God what the flesh is, and its corruption. This is the process when I have accepted God’s purpose and counsel respecting me, and as I accept the one I have to learn the other. But God would teach me the incurable nature of the flesh that is in me, not by occupying me with it, but rather with His purpose respecting me. I am privileged to say, wherever I may be along the path, “But we do know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are called according to purpose” (Rom. 8:28 JND). I can say that it matters little what the fare on the road may be, as long as I know surely and clearly what awaits me at home. God’s desire is to occupy you with what awaits you there. Christ is there, and the joy of that scene is what He is. You are going to be exactly like that Christ.

It is in this way that I learn what the flesh is, not by being occupied with it, but by being occupied with God’s final purpose and counsel for me. I say, Is this God’s purpose to conform me to the image of His Son? How unlike Him I am now! What a wretched thing is this flesh in me — nothing but rebellion in every way. This is true; but as your eye is upon the end and that blessed Object (to which, remember, it is God’s purpose to conform you, and not yours to conform yourself), you are “changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

It was not when the Apostle Paul was looking at himself that he saw how imperfect he was, but it was when he was looking at Christ. “I press toward the mark.” “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend [lay hold of] that for which I am also apprehended [laid hold of] by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12). Perfection here is complete likeness to Christ in glory. This was God’s purpose for Paul, and nothing else is His purpose for each of us. When the Apostle saw that purpose it got hold of his inmost soul, and set him running faster in the race. “I press toward the mark.” It was clear and distinct before his eye, and it eclipsed for him everything else. He said, “That I may win Christ.” Has it become the eclipsing substance for us all?

Satan always is seeking to occupy me with myself. This occupation never leads to a true judgment of myself, though to be moaning over my inconsistencies may appear to some to be pious and humble. The true object is outside; and as I am engaged with it, and with God’s purposes respecting me, I fashion my way and judge myself as an obstruction to those purposes. But Satan can get a good man occupied with himself. Job is an example of this, and in twenty chapters he expresses it; but God had to empty him of all that (Job 42:5-6). The object of the enemy is to get you so completely occupied with yourself that God’s purposes respecting you are accounted as nothing.

I am going to be like Christ in glory; and as I look at Christ I am “changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” God’s desire then for me, as expressed in Deuteronomy 8:16 and Deuteronomy 32:29, is, that I should consider the end — His end for me; and like Paul, to “press toward the mark.”

Adapted from H. C. Anstey