

# THE ETERNAL PURPOSE WHICH GOD MADE IN CHRIST JESUS CONCERNING THE CHURCH

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The Holy Scriptures reveal that God is a God of eternity. From eternity to eternity He is God—God the Father is eternal, God the Son is eternal, and God the Spirit also is eternal. The Triune God is self-existing and ever-existing, without beginning and without end. He is uncreated, and all His attributes, such as life, love, righteousness, joy, might, power, and glory, are also eternal. The book of Ephesians reveals that this God of eternity is also a God of purpose. Because His purpose was formed in Himself, it is inseparable from His eternal being. Accordingly, *eternal purpose* is a unique expression in Ephesians, underlining the fact that our God is both wondrously eternal and unwavering in His purpose.<sup>1</sup> The eternal purpose which God made in Christ Jesus is a central matter in Ephesians.

God's purpose stems from His eternal being, and the fulfillment of His purpose involves the impartation of His eternal attributes into His chosen people. God's eternal purpose is motivated by His eternal love for His elect and is executed by the dispensing of His eternal life into them to reproduce His eternal glory within them. Further, the realization of God's eternal purpose within the believers is ensured by the operation of His eternal power (Rom. 1:20), the power of His indestructible life, in them (Heb. 7:16). Concerning the fulfillment of His purpose, the eternal God (Isa. 40:28) declared, "Surely just as I conceived it, so has it happened; / And just as I have purposed it, so shall this stand" (14:24).

The various stages and aspects of God's work related to the accomplishment of His purpose are imbued with an eternal quality, for God's purpose is not only sourced in His eternal being but also carried out by the exercise of His eternal attributes. His counsel is unchangeable; His calling of the believers is irrevocable; and His covenant, kingdom, dominion, rule, redemption, and salvation are all eternal (Heb. 6:17; Rom. 11:29; Heb. 13:20; 2 Pet. 1:11; Psa. 145:13; Rev. 22:5; Heb. 9:12; 5:9). In keeping with this thought, a psalmist declares, "The counsel of Jehovah stands forever; / The intentions of His heart stand from generation to generation" (Psa. 33:11). Ultimately, despite the disobedience of man and the scheme of Satan to oppose the purpose of God, nothing and no one can thwart God's eternal purpose, and under God's sovereignty every event and person in the universe are utilized to carry it out (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11).

At its heart the Bible is the revelation of God and His eternal purpose. More than any other book of the Bible, Ephesians is focused on unveiling God's eternal purpose concerning the church as the Body of Christ. According to this Epistle, God's determined intent to impart Himself in His Divine Trinity as the grace of life into His believers is for the producing of the church as the Body of Christ. This fulfills God's original ordination for humanity—to express God in His glorious image and to represent Him with His authority to deal with His enemy (Gen. 1:26).