



REFLECTIONS

March 3, 2019

"Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Acts 9:15-16

Looking Back

Recent *Reflections* I've written and conversations I've had seem to have focused more than usual on life already lived. Perhaps the emphasis began with the reference to the family photo taken Christmas day. Included with us in the photo are our children and their respective growing families. "The fruits of our lives," we described them to be. So, began the lookback at those fruits and others for their similarities and differences with the vision and dreams we had when we set out on our journey oh those many years ago.

The journey led to places we didn't know existed, to challenges we never imagined confronting, to people's lives that influenced ours and lives we touched that could never have been in those initial dreams. Mostly though, the hand of God is clearly seen leading us all the way, teaching us and preparing us through all the many trials we faced and errors we made, to serve his purpose for our lives. And with it, I think we find a bit of our own purpose fulfilled too.

Fifteen years ago, the central theme of these *Reflections* focused attention to the road ahead—God's purpose for your life and mine. Discover it. Pursue it in service to him, ending with his final blessing, "Well done good and faithful servant." While I still see the pursuit of God's purpose for our lives as our calling, looking back, it is clearer to me that God uses our lives for his purposes even when we venture from the prescribed path.

As already said, this is not the first of my lookbacks in life. But this one feels a bit different because of its attention to God's work more than discernment of where He is leading me. Past lookbacks have recognized and acknowledged God's hand at work in the world, the miracles of nature and his clear presence manifested in other people's lives. This time, though, the view is more on yesterday's results than preparation for tomorrow. And here are my findings.

God has blessed me in this life in more ways than I could ever have imagined. Like most young people setting out on their journeys, I wanted my life to make a difference in the world. Looking back, the world *is* different, and whether I had a role in it or not, the difference has little to do with me and the purposes I aspired to serve. For everything I set out to do or be, God held the key. *What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.* (Revelation 3:7)

It's a blessing if God ever used me as an instrument for *his* purposes. And now, looking back, *There is nothing in us that allows us to claim that we are capable of doing this work. The capacity we have comes from God* (2 Corinthians 3:5 TEV).

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.