

### The Real Goal of Christianity

*In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said to God, "Thou hast dealt with my father David with great lovingkindness, and hast made me king in his place. Now, O Lord God, Thy promise to my father David is fulfilled; for Thou hast made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can rule this great people of Thine?" And God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth, or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge, that you may rule My people, over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed, nor those who will come after you." 2 Chron 1:7-13 NASB*

I want to explain something about the real goal of Christianity, and this passage about the conversation of God with Solomon is good to help show some aspects of the character of God and the operations of spiritual laws. These aspects are often overlooked by Christians who pray, and it is the things that often constitute the burdens of the heart of praying people that motivated me to talk about this subject of the goal of Christianity.

Reading the Bible passage above it is clear that God is not limited to giving us only what we asked for. He often, in direct response to a prayer, gives far beyond that which we asked for, or maybe even ever thought of. The occurrence of this beyond-expectation answer depends on how much He is pleased by the prayer request. God gave Solomon what he asked for and much more than that because He was pleased with his request.

The next point is about this pleasure of God in prayer requests. It is also clear from this discourse with Solomon that it is not everything we may ask for that would please the Lord, and this is apart from considering whether He would answer the prayer or not. Even if He were to grant those requests, He may not be pleased with them. We can easily see that there are more noble prayer points than asking for wealth, riches, honour, long life or the lives of one's enemies. Even though Solomon could have asked for these things and gotten them, God would *not* have had any special pleasure in his prayers. It is vital to emphasize that God would have granted the requests. I can imagine that if Solomon had asked for those things he would have gotten the kind of wealth he was able to conceive in his mind and would have defeated only the enemies he could specifically identify. God would not have done anything more than he asked because the requests would not have been pleasing to the Lord. We can easily see therefore that He prefers that a man or woman coming to Him in prayer has the more noble matters in mind. Such persons would get more than they bargained for in goodness. No wonder Jesus told us not to be mindful of those things in prayer (Matt 6:31).

What I see a lot today in Christianity is people focusing on the inferior things in the eyes of God and calling it effective prayer. People are often focused on the exact things that God was pleased that Solomon did not make an issue. Congregations gather in prayer focused on the lives of their

enemies; they spend all night prayer sessions praying about wealth and riches, and think they have been effective in prayer. They miss the main aim of Christianity.

#### The main aim

The aim of Christianity is not the supply of needs. Jesus didn't have to come and die to persuade God to supply our needs. God was already working miracles of supernatural supply and abundant prosperity long before He came. The dead were raised before Jesus and the sick had been healed again and again. Jesus did not come to introduce those miracles; they could have been done by God sending ordinary prophets in larger numbers with more anointing than the previous ones, without the death of the only begotten of the Father, if that was what He wanted to achieve. But that was not the aim.

One thing that no one could ever do for anybody and which necessitated the coming of God's Son to die on the cross was to create God's spirit inside people and make them literal children of God. Only few people, like Enoch, Moses and Samuel, were able to walk with God very closely in all the thousands of years before Christ, and even they had a limit. Moses always had to maintain a respectable distance between him and God, telling us thereby that sonship was not at all attained. Birthing the spirit of God in people was not achieved before Jesus came and died. The purpose of His coming was to make a way so that people could approach the Father having become His literal children.

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13 NASB*

There is a spiritual substance which is poured into the heart of the man or woman who accepts Jesus by believing in Him, and it is called the spirit of Christ. It is the seed of God and it grows like yeast until it has permeated the total being – spirit, soul and body – of the person.

*To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened." Luke 13:20-21 NASB*

Let me quickly emphasize that it grows till everything is affected, and it is that process of growth that is the real work of Christianity.

The changing of the very nature of someone in one single spiritual action, which then begins to work its way out, was never done until Jesus introduced the power of God in that area into the earth. God was never known as 'Father' until Jesus Christ came and introduced Him as such; that was the new name of God that He came and taught unto people. People had had all kinds of relationships with God and known Him by all sorts of names, but by that name Father, no one ever knew Him before Jesus came and showed it to us. When He made the statement "No one can come to the Father except through Me" he wasn't being boastful or trying to show the superiority of the 'religion' he was founding; He was just stating the simple fact that any other way, Moses included, does not lead you to the Father-God. It may lead to a kind of relationship with God, but you will

never know Him as Father. The coming of Jesus was to make us real children of God, with His very nature and spirit, manifesting His character in every aspect of life. We are each to be the modern day Jesus, who was thus spoken of:

*The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God... Heb 1:3 NLT*

He wants the seed deposited inside us to grow until the verse is a reality in the lives of each one of His children.

What shall we make of this therefore? Are we to continue to make Christianity appear as if God is just trying to supply our needs or help us become rich? Is He primarily concerned about giving you a job, a husband or a child?

No; a thousand times, no. We are to see the main aim that God called us to. It is called the higher calling; it is a call to the eternal purpose of God which became manifested in Christ.

*...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations... which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory. And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. Col 1:26-28 NASB*

God's main aim is to transform us totally so that we become just like Christ was—the exact representation of His nature. That is what He is doing. Pursuing this in our lives is the main thing about seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. When you do this seeking, all other things are added unto you. This is why I started with the story of God's conversation with Solomon; he sought a higher thing, and all other things he didn't seek were added to him. Let us not mess up the order.

#### Seeking the real thing

What are we to seek therefore? In answer to this Paul gave us the example of his life.

*But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ... for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order **that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him**, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ... **that I may know Him**, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained it, or have already **become perfect**, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Phil 3:7-13 NASB*

The summary of what Paul was seeking, and is thereby encouraging us to seek, is to become perfect in Christlikeness. If we do this, all other things are added to us. We are not to seek any other thing but to allow the others to be added. Even in the midst of our afflictions, we are to seek Christlikeness first and seek the word of God concerning that affliction. When we discover the word of God, we hold it up and declare it over our lives and then receive the manifestation because it is truth. It dispels darkness.

There has been confusion in previous times over the role of affliction in the lives of believers. Many have said that Christians should kind of enjoy affliction as God sends afflictions to purify them; others came afterwards and began to teach that afflictions are only of the devil and therefore have no good thing in them. Well, like most things, the truth is usually a balance between the two extremes. Yes afflictions can be of the devil, but they come only either because we permitted them by our ignorance or works, or God did the permitting to get our attention.

*Teach me good discernment and knowledge,  
For I believe in Thy commandments.  
Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
But now I keep Thy word. Ps 119:66-67 NASB*

The time of our affliction is a call to repentance and to learning and obeying the truth. In the midst of our affliction we should discover the truth and hold it. We can easily all agree that affliction was not designed to hold us down; we are to allow it work the work of focusing us on truth quickly so we get out of it. The duration of the affliction is lengthened only as we ignore the truth. My emphasis here is that even in the midst of affliction, what we seek is not deliverance first, but the face of God and transformation into the obedience of Christ; however there is deliverance once we take hold of these things. Affliction cannot hold you down if Christ is formed by the entrance of His word into that area.

*And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. Acts 2:24 NASB*

Once Christ is allowed to be formed in your life in any area, it is not possible to be held any longer under the power of failure, sickness or death. It is not a sign of spirituality to remain under affliction, claiming God is teaching you patience; if you say that you are admitting that you are difficult to teach and too stubborn to quickly repent. We must allow the word to have its way in us and allow the transformation into the image of Christ. This is why we do not want any other deliverance but that which will come to us through God working Christ into us. Indeed healing power is part of the life of Christ.

*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. Rom 8:11 NASB*

The living spirit of Christ in you gives life to your mortal body (vs 10). Life is the consequence of having Christ dwell in our hearts by faith.

This is the mistake that is often made. Many have afflictions and then turn to prayer and to God for solutions to their afflictions. They desire healing, prosperity, fruit of the womb, etc; but in the midst of their search few ever focus on what God wants to do in their lives. God can easily do those miracles, and sometimes He does them, especially just to reach out to people with His love, but He knows that what they actually need is more than that miracle of supernatural supply; the real need is for the life of God to be created inside them. Many are not willing to actually give their lives to

Christ so that he might totally change them. They just want their healing and their prosperity. When they do get it, it doesn't last, and this because they missed the real gift of God.

*Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." John 4:10-11 NASB*

People often make the mistake of focusing on the manifestations of life rather than focusing on the dwelling of Christ and the life in Him. Christ wants to be formed in them, but they are looking for outward things.

Let us take marriage as an example; it will help me illustrate this spiritual operation better.

### Christ in the home

When husbands and wives are counselled, the focus is often on how to do things that please one party or avoid doing what is offensive to the other. I have heard messages that emphasize the difference between men and women, (which is not a lie; indeed there are some differences) but these teachings to me seem to excuse the behaviours of people rather than emphasize Christlikeness. For this reason we struggle much as Christians. The truth is that God did not plan that Christian marriages will enjoy bliss by these psychological analyses but by a simple manifestation of Christlikeness in both the husband and the wife. Each is to strive to attain to be conformable unto His death and for attaining the resurrection of the dead in that area (Phil 3:10,11). The resurrection of the dead is the bliss of a formerly 'dead' marriage. This comes by having the attitude of Christ in each person. No wonder Paul taught,

*25 Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ** also loved the church ... 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies... 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, **just as Christ** also does the church. Eph 5*

Did we notice that God expects that husband-hood should be patterned after Christ, and not after any other thing? This is what the problem is with many of our teachings today; we find every pattern that we believe will make the woman happy, learning even things that are often against the pattern of Christ, as long as we believe that it will make somebody happy. These things get temporary results but no enduring success.

The pattern of Christ exists also for the woman. We can see that the Bible shows us again and again how she is to relate with her husband with Christ as the centre of everything (1 Cor 11, Eph 5). Marital bliss is a side effect of Christlikeness on the part of the spouses in a home. Every trouble in the home is tied to how distant the spouses are from attaining the formation of Christ in their lives. We should place less emphasis on psychology and such things; we are not to aim for marital bliss with any other method but the emphasizing of Christlikeness. The couple should realize that the more Christ-like they become, the smoother it is to love one another. How blissful our homes will be when we understand this. Yet many people are seeking to be happy in marriage without being willing to fully give their lives to Christ and be transformed by the entrance of His word; what misguided effort.

Progress in Christianity

The marriage issue is just an illustration. I am emphasizing that the aim of Christianity is the development of Christ in each and every one of us, and we are not to gather or focus on any other thing in our lives. Our studies, learning, fellowship, personal prayer must be on the discovery of the face of Christ and our personal transformation into that image. That is progress in Christianity. All other things are added to that.

Many times people talk and behave like God has disappointed them; they feel thus because they have a different expectation from Him than He expected them to have. They think because they served him He should give them money, children, health, etc. They have served for years and they have none of those things. They are disappointed. But I have never heard anyone complain that 'after all these years of serving God He hasn't worked out the patience of Christ in me.' Such complains are not heard, meanwhile that is the primary thing that He is trying to achieve in their lives.

Whatever we are doing in life, the first aim of God is to bring you into the level of Christ. Anything that you are doing in life that is not actively cooperating to bring this to pass is not at all a service to God. Christ's spirit in you makes some statements impossible to come out of your lips. A true Christ-man can never say God disappointed him for not doing something for him. The spirit of Christ is that which serves even unto death.

*The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had... He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death — his death on the cross. Phil 2:5,8 TEV*

Christ formed in you

*My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you. Gal 4:19 NASB*

When Christ has been formed in you, you will have a different drive from the people around you. Your push for success will have a very different flavour than those around you. A person with the Christ-spirit formed understands that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses." He understands that pursuing material things is like chasing after the wind. He is more purpose oriented and has a primary goal of fulfilling God's call for his life. He or she understands that walking in a manner pleasing to God is more important than anything else. That is what is called a *spirit*. Your spirit is defined as the force within you that is the 'push' for all you do. The spirit of Christ being in you means the same motivation that Christ had in His life is what you now have. For Jesus Christ, He said, "my satisfaction is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work." Paul understood this, and all the calamities of life couldn't move him. He said he was the same in the midst of poverty as in the midst of plenty. He had learned how to be the same despite the situations of life. How?

*For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. Phil 4:13 NLT*

Many people still have the wrong spirit, and they are expecting God to answer their prayers which are borne out of this wrong spirit. Many have the spirit of anger still controlling them, and they

want to set every city that offends them on fire. All their prayers are directed against their perceived enemies, but God is saying to them that the intolerant spirit inside them is the problem. When the disciples went this way, Jesus Christ said to them, “you should understand that you have a different spirit.” (Luk 9:55)

Your prayers for money and for promotion, for a husband and for children, what is it all about? What is the spirit behind it? Competition, vain-glory, human pride? God is saying to you again today to forget those things for now, make your prayers a different type and you will not even know when all those things will be added to you. God is saying to you to allow Him work in you until your character is clearly in the image of God. Then you really have a testimony. Any testimony that doesn't start from the place is a temporary blessing.

Friends, this is the primary thing that God is working in your life and in mine—to have us become the exact image of God for our generation to see. All other things are secondary. It is time to realign your prayer points. Here are a few to start with.

*I pray that I will be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that I may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col 1:9-10, personalized)*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way. Ps 139:23-24*

As for all your needs, know that the Father knows them already (Matt 6:32); just read Psalm 23 to calm your soul.

*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.*

Life can be sweet.

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