

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: What is the goal of the Christian life? Paul mentions pressing on toward the goal in Philippians. What is he talking about?

ANSWER: It goes without saying that one of the biggest impacts of sin is the focus on self. Biblically, we refer to this as pride. Many believe that pride is just thinking too much of self. While this is true, it must be recognized that pride manifests itself in many ways. The most common belief concerning pride is that if we possess it, we think ourselves better than others. This is certainly one type but there are other kinds. For example there is self-protective pride. This kind of pride causes us to keep people at a distance. We tend to be suspicious of others. It leads us to question others' motives and intent. It generally leads us to be very judgmental of others and moves us to think the worst of them. Another type of pride is religious pride. If we are filled with religious pride, we make all of our service to God about us. We tend to make ourselves the center of all we do for God. We view all of the Christian life as being about God's attempt to take us to heaven. The question posed above gets at the very heart of religious pride.

We use the above as a way of introducing the purpose for which God has called us. For many in the body of Christ religious pride has overridden the real reason for which we live our life here on the earth. If you ask most members of the church why they live as they do they will respond that they want to go to Heaven. In addition, the answer of why we are Christians also includes the fact that we want God to bless us. We desire peace and joy. So we serve in order to receive. But is this the real purpose we have in becoming a child of God? Is it really all about our desire? If it really is all about us, then why didn't God just take us home when we obeyed the gospel? I mean really, if it is all about us, why are we still here? We made our decision. We obeyed His command to be baptized. We have been forgiven. So Lord, take us home to glory! But He didn't. We are still here. Could it be that while we certainly want to make heaven our home and want our life to be filled with peace and joy, that these are not primary reasons God has saved us?

As we search the scripture, it becomes apparent that while we are certainly blessed by a life lived for Him, blessing our life

was not God's ultimate purpose. Note what Paul writes in Romans 8:28-29,

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

This passage clearly shows that God called us according to His purpose. From verse 29, we learn that God has predetermined the ultimate goal for the Christian. His purpose for us is conformation to the image of His Son. God wants us to be like Christ! This is God's purpose and therefore our goal in life. This is why we were not immediately taken into heaven. Our life in Him is about transformation. We are to be transformed into the image of Christ. We are to possess His mind and learn to be like Him.

The above provides the framework for our spiritual growth. Peter tells us why Christ-likeness is so important. He states:

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."
(2 Peter 3:18)

Peter tells us that we are to grow in Christ-likeness. He also states that the reason for becoming like Christ is for His glory. It is not just about us getting to heaven or having a wonderful life here on earth. Rather it is about becoming like Jesus so that we might bring attention to His glory. It is His glory that we seek to declare.

We need to keep in mind that when we speak of having a life that glorifies God, we are not indicating that we need to add something that God lacks. God is a glorious God and needs nothing added to His nature. The word "glory" refers to His majesty and as such it belongs to God because He is who He is. It is His kingly majesty that belongs to Him because He is the supreme ruler of all. It is majesty in the sense of the absolute perfection of deity. It is the absolute perfection of God manifested in Christ that we seek to declare.

When we speak of glorifying, God we do not speak of adding something to His nature, but rather we are to bring attention to His perfect nature. It is because of His glory and its declaration that God created the universe, including man. The

created world is designed to declare the glory that He possesses. This is what David meant when he wrote,

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech. And night unto night reveals knowledge." (Psalms 19:1-2)

God created all things to draw attention to His glory. In fact, it can be said that all things He created has served His purpose except fallen man and fallen angels. However, because of His love for man, we can through Christ, fulfill His purpose. It is only through His Son that man can fulfill the purpose for which we were created. This is why His purpose for us is to be conformed to the image of His Son. When we grow in Christ-likeness the life we live draws attention to the wonderful glory of God.

Our discussion of this subject would not be complete without answering the question of how one becomes like Christ. We need to know how to become like Jesus.

One of the richest passages concerning this subject is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18. Paul writes,

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

This verse complete with its context furnishes us with how we can reach the ultimate goal of God. It teaches us that we are in the process of being transformed into the glorious image of Christ.

The first principle we note is that the Christian life is one of transformation. Transformation comes from the Greek word "metamorphoo." This corresponds to our English metamorphosis. It means to "change into another form, to transform, to transfigure". As Christians we are to undergo a transformation. Paul states this also in Romans 12:1-2. Here we are admonished not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

The second thing we note is that the transformation is to be in the same image as Christ. This is the same as being conformed into the image of God's son as was mentioned in Romans 8:29.

Paul also tells us that our transformation comes by beholding. He uses the expression "with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror". The context of the passage helps us to understand the meaning. He is alluding to Moses who out of necessity put a veil on his face after he had received the 10 commandments on Sinai. It is in like manner that our transformation takes place. With us, however, it is with unveiled face. The Israelites were unable to behold any of the glory of God. We because of God's mercy and forgiveness can behold the glory of the Christ. The word "behold" means more than just a glance but suggests contemplation and meditation.

We see from the text that Jesus is the object of our contemplation. It is His glory that we behold. It is the glory of the Lord that causes us to shine as lights in the world. Just as Moses' face shone so also does our life shine as we reflect the Lord's glory as we live here on earth.

Paul also uses the phrase "just as by the Spirit of the Lord". The Holy Spirit plays a role in our beholding. It is only through the Spirit's work, that we behold the glory of Jesus. What we know about Jesus came through the Spirit whose ministry was to glorify Him. It was the Spirit that reminded the apostles of all Jesus said and did. It was the Holy Spirit that inspired their writings. As we contemplate upon the inspired Scriptures, we are able to behold the glory of the Lord by virtue of what the Spirit has done.

As we study the Scripture we are able to put off the old man, renew our minds, and put on the new man who is renewed in the image of Christ. Space does not allow a thorough discussion of this put-off, put-on dynamic so we refer our readers to Ephesians 4:17-32 for a wonderful study on this subject.

In conclusion, we have found that the purpose for which we have as Christians is to become like Christ. This is done so that we might glorify God. This is what we are all about. This is to be foundation from whence we all are to live. We must as God's people seek His glory above all things and in all things. To fail here is to fail the reason for which we were called.

Finally, please note the word of Paul in I Corinthians 10:31, *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*

SAM DICK
Cave City, KY

ISN'T IT STRANGE

Isn't it strange how a twenty dollar bill seems like such a large amount when you donate it to church, but such a small amount when you go shopping?

Isn't it strange how two hours seem so long when you're at church, and how short they seem when you're watching a good movie?

Isn't it strange that you can't find a word to say when you're praying, but you have no trouble thinking what to talk about with a friend?

Isn't it strange how difficult and boring it is to read one chapter of the Bible, but how easy it is to read a hundred pages of a popular novel?

Isn't it strange how everyone wants front-row-tickets to concerts or games, but they do whatever is possible to sit at the last row in Church?

Isn't it strange how we need to know about an event for Church two or three weeks before the day so we can include it in our agenda, but we can adjust it for other events in the last minute?

Isn't it strange how difficult it is to learn a fact about God to share it with others, but how easy it is to learn, understand, extend and repeat gossip?

Isn't it strange how we believe everything that magazines and newspapers say, but we question the words in the Bible?

Isn't it strange how everyone wants a place in heaven, but they don't want to believe, do, or say anything to get there?

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES

June
1 – 4

June
4 – 9

LOCATION

Load Congregation
Load, KY

Taylor's Cross Roads Congregation
Roanoke, AL

SPEAKER

Joe Hill
(Hager Hill, KY)

J.D. McDonald
(Woodbury, TN)

June 7, 9 – 11	Dowell Hill Congregation Columbus, IN	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)
June 11 – 16	Mt. Carmel Congregation Woodland, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 12 – 16	Bethany Congregation Nancy, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 15 – 18	Marrowbone, KY	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
June 18 – 23	Ephesus Congregation Ephesus, GA	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 18 – 23 Mon.- Fri. 7:00 PM Sun. 10:30 AM & 6:00 PM	Hokes Bluff Congregation Hokes Bluff, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 19 – 22	Fourth Avenue Congregation Algood, TN	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
June 23 – 25 Fri. and Sat. 6:30 PM CST Sun. 9:30 AM & 4:00 PM CST	Antioch Congregation Greenup, IL	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)
June 26 – 30	Owens Road Congregation Prattville, AL	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 26 – 30	<u>Camp Meeting 2006</u> <u>Western Hills Guest Ranch</u> Wagoner, OK	<u>Various Speakers</u>
June 30 – July 2	Chapel Hill Congregation Pell City, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Which king was considered worse than any other king of Israel?
2. Which creation day did God create the stars?
3. What did the angel of the Lord do with the offering given by Gideon?

4. James 3 says one who offends not in word may be called what?
5. What did Moses do without, during the 40 days he spent on Mount Sinai?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .