

Forward to "*Basic Christianity*"

"I've accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, now what?"

There are those who think that after a person has accepted Jesus as their Savior that all his problems will disappear, but that just isn't true. If all God wanted to accomplish in our life was to take you to heaven to live eternal with Him, He would have taken us to heaven the moment we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior. But God left us in this world for a reason. He has something to complete in our life here on earth in this earthly life.

Receiving Jesus Christ as our personal Savior is the greatest, wisest, best decision we ever made, however, this is just the beginning of a new life...a new life that calls for a number of changes that we need help to understand. These lessons are to help explain God's purpose for our life...what happened to us when we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior...how to understand God's Word...how to become a strong, mature Christian... how to know God's will and what God expects of us.

You should realize, right from the beginning that the Christian life is not always an easy life. There are fights to fight, battles to win and habits and lifestyles to change. The moment a Christian sets his heart on pleasing God, he finds that he can't do it alone because there is a powerful drive inside him that makes him WANT to do something else.

Praying does not always come easily. When one attempts to concentrate on the Lord, often all sorts of scenes surface, and the mind begins to wander. When one desires to study God's Word, there's a compulsion to do others things. It seems no matter what one wants to do for the Lord, his old life keeps tugging at him, prodding him to do something else, and this pull is so powerful that, often, he winds up doing things that displease the Lord.

Jesus tells us that . . . like a man who is building a tower, who must sit down and "count the cost" to see if he has enough money to complete it, or . . . like a king going to war, who must "first down and consider whether he is able to with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand" . . . we, too, must consider the cost of discipleship because Jesus says, "any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple . . . and anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple." - Luke 14:27-33

What has discouraged many a sincere Christian is that, even though he is a Christian, he finds himself doing things that displease the Lord. He hates doing these things, but, yet, he can't seem to help doing them at times. The questions that one then asks are, "How can a true believer, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, do those things which hurt the Lord even when he really doesn't want to do them? What is this power of the 'old life' that keeps one from doing what he should do and makes him do that which he shouldn't do?"

These lessons contain the *basic truths* needed for the Spirit-filled life. You will learn that, until one is saved, he has only one nature, but, after he is saved, every Christian has *two* natures. When one is unsaved, and has only one nature, there is no struggle because he simply does what he wants to do. However, once one receives Christ, he receives a new nature that is at war with the old nature because the old nature loves the old life and the new nature loves the new life in Christ Jesus! It is because these two natures are opposed to one another becomes a series of trials and tribulation . . . failures and frustrations.

The old nature is powerful and one must learn how to develop strength in Christ. The purpose of these lessons is to explain God's wonderful program for bringing believers to maturity and this explanation will provide the insights necessary for one to understand this "*war*" between his two natures. A Christian CAN live the Spirit-filled life and win the war that rages within him, but he can't begin to fight until he knows how.

The purpose of these lessons, then, is to show us God's ultimate intention in Salvation and to give us some basic principles in living the Spirit-filled, Christian life.

There are three things essential to your success as a Christian, they are: Prayer, the reading of God's Word and faith.

- (1) Prayer is speaking to God and letting Him respond to you
- (2) Reading the Bible is your food to get spiritual strength and your way of learning God's will for your life
- (3) Faith is your having a simple trust in the promises of God's Word.

You need to understand the importance of your devotional life...water baptism... the filling of the Holy Spirit...attendance at a home church...and other matters concerning your Christian walk.

Basic Christianity

To understand salvation, we need to be able to see God's original purpose for man and realize what His ultimate intention for us in our Christian walk.

Referring to God, 2 Timothy 1:9-10, teaches *"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."*

It is important in living a victorious Christian life that we have a correct understanding of what God is saying in these verses. This passage of Scripture state that, first, God saved us and, second, called us to a life of holiness (that is, to be like Him) -- not as a reward for anything that we have done, but rather, in fulfillment of His own loving purpose, that was shown to us through union with Christ Jesus, eternal ages ago. And now, this purpose is brought fully into view by the appearance of Jesus Christ, Who has put a stop to the power of death, has revealed true life, and has given us immunity from eternal death.

Let's look at this concept more closely. In the beginning, when God created man, He had an ultimate purpose for him -- however, man sinned and fell from that original purpose. Now, as a result, man must be *"lifted from that fallen condition"* and brought back to the place that Adam lost.

Man's purpose then becomes two fold:

- (1) First, man, in his fallen condition, must to be brought back to his original *"holy calling"* that Adam had lost when he sinned.
- (2) Secondly, man had to fulfill God's original desire for a family that was the *"eternal purpose"* that God had for man before Adam sinned -- the purpose God had for man before the world began. (Ephesians 1:4-5)

When God created man, and place him in the Garden of Eden, man was **NOT** all that God intended him to *become*. He had **NOT** *"attained"* the full stature God desired.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT BIBLICAL CONCEPT -- because we will only be able to understand God's ultimate intention for each one of us to the degree that we understand this concept!

If we think of Adam as the *"zenith"* of full stature that God intended for man, then we will see God's program of salvation as only the *"restoration of all things"* to the Adamic creation and we will never realize God's ultimate intention for us!

To see God's program of salvation only in this way is a very narrow view of God's purpose in our salvation. Scripture teaches us that Adam **did not** receive the *Divine Image* by God's *"creative hand."* There was much more to God's ultimate purpose

for mankind than just what His “*creative touch*” could accomplish. God’s ultimate purpose for mankind required that man be in a vital union, and cooperate, with the Source of God’s Life!

It is true that Adam was created perfect – just as an innocent baby is born perfect – but he was wholly *untried* and *undeveloped* in his moral nature.

We must distinguish between what Adam was by “*creation*” and what he was to “*become*” by union and cooperation with God.

Adam had received “*creative life*” by an endowment from God and he was to be a container that could receive the “*Divine Life of God*” -- if he chose too, by cooperating in maintaining union with God’s Divine Life.

God’s ultimate purpose for man was form him to become, through inner spiritual development, a “*son*” in full stature.

God designed Adam for *development* -- like a flower bud grows and develops toward full blossom and, then, finally becomes the fruit it was intended to be.

The apostle Paul was gripped with one concept, “*That all things that happened to him might be for the furtherance of the Gospel*” (Philippians 1:12).

God’s original purpose for man was not just to save him from sin that he could go to heaven, or so that he might be delivered from his troubles and be granted an easier life, but rather, God’s original purpose for man was to conform him into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit, in Paul letter to the Ephesians, points out that, because man sinned, he needed “*redemption*,” a provision made available through Christ Jesus, God’s Son: “*In whom we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*” (Ephesians 1:7).

However, note that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to begin this letter to the Ephesians by saying, “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath **blesed us with all spiritual blessings** in heavenly places in Christ – (or, as one translation renders it “*crowned us with every spiritual blessing that heaven itself enjoys*) (Ephesians 1:1-3).*

Paul begins Ephesians by starting God’s eternal purpose for man – “*God blessed us with all spiritual blessings **IN CHRIST***.” Then, Paul goes on to say, “*According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself – [destined us to be accepted as sons through Jesus Christ] – according to the good pleasure of His will. To the praise of the glory of His grace – [so that we might manifest the splendor of His grace] – wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved*” (verses 4- 6).

As the fellowship between the Father and the Son was in eternity past, so, also, was it in the Father's heart that many sons be conformed to His Son's image, even before the foundation of the world.

With anticipation, God planned that His eternal Son would become the "incarnate" God (God in flesh), by so doing, God would be sharing His divine life with His human family – *that was yet to be created!* God planned to visit this planet by the incarnation of His Son, *not because man sinned*, but rather, so that Jesus might become the very life of man! And this, God's life becoming our life, was God's ultimate intention for man!

If we understand what God's purpose is for our life, our outlook on life, and our commitment to God's service would take on a whole new dimension!

The first chapter of Ephesians continues: *"Wherein He hath abounded toward us [overflowed into our lives] in all wisdom, and prudence – [insight and discernment]. Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him"* (verses 8-10).

Note: God, the Father, determined that His Son should become "incarnate" (robed in flesh) as His means of bringing a vast family of "sons" into the glorious measure of full stature!

Here, in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul is looking at God's purpose for man, while *"seated with God in heavenly places."* Things certainly look different when one is able to view the whole picture from the veranda of the universe. Paul see the eternal Father yearning for a vast family of "sons" conformed to the image of His eternal Son, in whom He had found such delight!

From the very beginning, *"before the foundation of the world,"* our heavenly Father planned *to share His life with man and to express Himself throughout the universe during all ages to come!*

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made know by the church (all believers) the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

God's Word tells us that Christ bore all of our sins in His own body on the tree. God placed the sins of the world upon Him, the Father. He was our sin bearer. He became sin, bearing our sin, **BUT**, we must not only see, and believe, that Christ died to save us from our sins, we must also understand the *continuous work of God's H9oly Spirit in our life to conform us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.*

Believing in Jesus Christ as our Savior, to save us from sin, and accepting Him as our personal Savior, is *necessary* – because man sinned (“*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*”) but this acceptance of Jesus as our personal Savior is only a crisis act. It is not God’s eternal purpose for us because God’s eternal purpose is a process of growth!

When God created man, and placed him on earth, man was created in innocence, but ultimately, God’s purpose for man was to share His life with him and bring him to perfection – *to maturity*.

It was *not* man’s defection that determined God’s purpose of sharing His divine life with him because this was already in His original plan. Before man ever sinned, even before he was created, God determined to share Himself with man through His Son, Jesus Christ. And, for God to accomplish this original determination did not necessitate that man sin.

In the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, man was given two trees, which represented two ways he could choose to go. He could choose to go **(1)** God’s way, or **(2)** he could go his own way. In other words, his opportunity for development could be along two mutually exclusive lines:

1. He could choose to go his own way and eat of the “*tree of knowledge of good and evil,*” choosing the development of his soul powers – independent of God.

or

2. He could choose to go God’s way and “*eat of the tree of life,*” choosing the development of his spiritual powers, and the fulfillment of God’s purpose of his life, by being in “*living union*” with God.

Adam chose the expansion, or development, of his soul powers, and this choice of “*self*” is what became the animating power of man. Before man can develop spiritual, he must undergo a radical deliverance from sin, but this deliverance is only the “*doorway*” to his spiritual development unto full stature.

We must never allow our self to become so interested in just “*being free from sin,*” or just “*making it to heaven,*” that we are warped and blighted into spiritual lethargy, allowing escape from sin and its penalty to become our only goal in our Christian walk.

True, we sinned and turned to our own way, but this did not cause God to change His plan. He would still share Himself with us through His Son, only now, because of sin, He would do it by first providing “*redemption*” through the Cross. When God redeems man out of his lost predicament, it is by the crisis act of man believing in the finished work of the Cross and receiving the divine life of Jesus Christ, the reception of which is what God intended for man all along.

We must not reckon the finished work of the Cross as a finality but rather, we must remember that God designed that there be a continuous work of the Holy Spirit in our life that only begins at the Cross, a beginning that makes possible a daily receiving, or sharing, of God’s divine life.

God could not ignore man's awful defection into sin. That is why there must be a crisis act of regeneration in man's life. Man must "*believe unto righteousness*," receive the divine life of Christ, indeed, be "*born-again*," but, having believed and received, he is now ready to share the "*Life of God's Son*," is to be a continuous participation in, and with, Christ's life within, that means that one does not have to be wearied, defeated, or frustrated, by trying to live the Christian life on his own and in his own strength. One must make a determination that he will daily acknowledge the Lordship of Christ in his life, and that his strength and ability will come only from drawing on Christ's divine life within.

Think of viewing a photograph of a hedge plant some kind against a background that had been blocked out. You have nothing to relate the flowering shrub too, or nothing to compare its size with. You could only make a wild guess as to how large that plant was. Without a "*background*," you would not be able to tell whether the plant was a seedling or a giant oak. But *with the background* in the picture, enabling you to see the full landscape, you would be able to determine what size the tree was.

So it is that, without the background of God's eternal purpose for our lives, we are unable to adequately know the meaning of any part of our Christian life. God deliver us from a limited view of His purpose for our lives, and help us to see that He desires to exalt and magnify Himself through us. Yes, God desires to live His life through us.

The apostle Paul gives us the "*eternal vantage point of life*" that God gave to him and we must keep all the temporal parts of our life related to the "*background*" of the Father's eternal purpose for our life.

The more we comprehend God's eternal purpose for our lives, and that, that eternal purpose began "*before the foundation of the world*," in the heart of God, the more we are able to understand why Paul, and his writing to the Ephesians, makes this eternal purpose his starting place.

As we begin to better comprehend God's eternal purpose for our life, we begin to more fully appreciate how the Father originally purposed that *everything* is to be accomplished through, and centered in, His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, was to become man's very life!

Of course, God foreknew that man would sin and, therefore, He prepared for that emergency, but this did not determine, nor alter, God's original eternal purpose that "*all things find their summation in Christ Jesus, His divine Son*."

The tragedy of focusing in our just the "*redemption from sin*," as wonderful as that is, is that it makes sin and redemption a necessity in God's plan, as if God's primary purpose was to *redeem* mankind. This viewpoint of God's purpose for man reaches only to man in his "*fallen condition*" and shows Christ's incarnation only in the light of God's redemptive plan. God's eternal purpose for man is much higher than just his redemption

from sin. If redemption from sin is our narrow horizon and concept of God's work in our lives, then everything God has planned for us is seen from the perspective of man's fall into sin, rather, then from the perspective of God's eternal purpose of conforming man into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, everything that happens to us takes its meaning from the fact that "*man has sinned.*" The danger of this concept, of just seeing "*deliverance from sin*" as God's purpose for us – is that it is perverse, and it gives a man-centered perspective of life that will blight one's maturity and spiritual growth.

We must not minimize the importance of Christ's redemption because it is God's "*recovery*" program. However, only as we see redemption as it is rightly related to God's eternal purpose, can we really fully appreciate the meaning, and ultimate purpose, of God's plan of redemption.

If we see our salvation against the background of God's eternal purpose, then, we have taken the initial step in realizing God's ultimate intention for our life, and, upon this realization, we see how much more important, and imperative, our redemption becomes.

As a new convert, we must not fall into the trap of a narrow perspective of believing that all God wants to do in our life is to enable us to "*escape*" from sin and hell. But rather, we must realize that God desires to accomplish His *original purpose* for our life, which is to conform us into the image of His Son. Therefore, purpose to dedicate our self to this divine calling and purpose that God has for us.

Praise God that Christ's life and death conquered sin, self, the world, and the devil so that we do not have to be in bondage to any of these monarchs, however, Christ's death and resurrection not only provides the way of escape from these enemies of our spiritual development, but it also provides the way of God's fulfillment of His eternal purpose in our life.

Reading 2 Timothy 1:8 from the J.B. Phillips translation, it renders, "*Accept as I do, all the hardships that faithfulness to the Gospel entails in the strength that God give you. For He has rescued us from all that is evil, and called us to a life of holiness, not because of any of our achievements, but **for His own purpose!***" -- This life that God has called us to is the life that will render true joy and fulfillment.

Verse 9 continues, "*Before time began He planned to give us in Christ the grace to achieve this purpose...*" Then, come verse 10, "*But it is only since our Savior Jesus Christ has been revealed that the method has become apparent*" (2 Timothy 1:8-10 by J. B Phillips).

It is possible for us to be saved from sin and destruction and, yet, to be "*lost*" to the ultimate intention God has for us.

God help us to not let this happen us our life!