

Vessels through Whom Christ can Minister His Life

What is God's Purpose for Your Life?

After leaving them to themselves, Paul told the Philippians to work out their own salvation.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” Phil 2:12-13.

Paul was not telling them to keep working to acquire their eternal salvation. That had been already accomplished by Jesus on the cross – a perfect work, perfectly completed for all time, never to be repeated. They had already accepted Jesus as their saviour and Lord, and so they were eternally saved. Paul was telling the Philippians to work out the purpose for which God had saved them, and to work towards accomplishing it.

Sadly, too many Christians think that the Christian walk consists of going to church every Sunday, attending a study group through the week, trying to do good to others, and live a morally pure life. What is God's ultimate purpose for us once we have received salvation? For the answer to this we must turn to the example Jesus provided for us whilst on earth.

What was God's Purpose for Jesus during His Life on Earth?

1. Of course the main purpose for Jesus coming to earth was to reconcile mankind back to God by bearing the punishment for their sins on the cross. When facing the hour of the cross Jesus said, **“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.”** John 12:27.
2. Jesus came to reveal the Father to us. When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, He replied, **“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?”** John 14:9.
3. Jesus came to reveal how we are to live this Christian life according to the will of the Father. In the following readings Jesus explained how His life and ministry on earth were ever dependant on the presence of the Spirit of the Father, who ministered life and truth through Him.

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” John 14:10-11.

“For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me.” John 12:49-50.

“I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” John 5:30.

“I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.” John 8:26.

“Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.” John 17:7-8.

At the end of His ministry Jesus addressed His disciples, telling them that in the same way that the Father sent Him, He was sending them.

“So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As [in the same manner] the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” John 20:21-22. As the Father sent Jesus to live in union with Him, and minister through Him, Jesus was sending them to live and minister in union with Himself that He might minister His life and truth through them.

“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me”. John 6:57.

This then is the nature of the Christian life. It is a life lived in union with the Lord, believing by faith that He dwells within us, and that all the qualities and attributes of His life are in us. Jesus came to impart His life to us, so that we might overcome all trials and meet all needs by Him.

He said, **“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.”** John 10:10.

How do we partake of the Life of Christ?

The first thing is to believe the Scriptures when they say that Christ dwells within us. E.g.

“At that day you will know that I *am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” John 14:20-21.

“I [my carnal self being] have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal 2:20-21.

“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” John 6:56-58.

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” John 14:23.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they would accept this truth - **“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Eph 3:17-19.**

If we believe that Christ dwells within us, by faith we may draw on His life to meet our needs in all of our circumstances. We should learn to draw near to Jesus to live in union with Him, surrendering our burdens and needs to Him, to the end that we might confront them together as one. We have His invitation,

“Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matt 11:28-12:1.

Obviously Paul did this, for he said, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Phil 4:13.**

Ministering to Others

As practising Christians, our purpose is to be vessels through whom Christ can minister His life to others. In reality it is Christ ministering to His brethren. Those who minister to others by their own initiative, their own ideas and their own ability, are rendering works of the flesh which are odious to the Lord. That is why Jesus distains those who commended their own self-works.

“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” Matt 7:21-23.

Jesus said in the parable of the vine and its branches, **“Without Me you can do nothing.”**

“I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” John 15:5.

So how do we go about ministry in union with the Lord? What we don't do is to be looking around for those we can minister to. The Lord chooses who He wants to minister to,

and provides the circumstances. Remember at the pool at “**Bethesda**,” a multitude of sick and paralysed were gathered, waiting for the stirring of the waters. But Jesus chose one man, and said to him “**Do you want to be made well?**” One man was chosen and healed.

Our position is to wait on the Lord, being restfully available, and when the time comes to be used, to be instantly obedient.”

In our ministry to others we should always remember that the ministry is the Lord’s, and that He supplies the direction and the empowering that produces lasting fruit. Our dependence is not on our faith or our maturity, but always on the Lord. We see a picture of how this happened in this account of the ministry of the disciples.

“Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”
Acts 14:3.

How does Christ Manifested in us and through us?

The Holy Spirit is the vehicle through whom the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ is ministered in us and through us.

Because the flesh wars against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, the degree with which Jesus is able to use us to minister His life to others, is the degree to which we have consigned our carnal fleshly natures, with all self-reliance and self-dependence, to the altar of the cross.

Drawing on the Life of Jesus to Meet our Personal Needs

In receiving the blessings of Christ’s indwelling life, ALL Christians, even those newly converted, can believe that Christ dwells within them, and by faith draw on His life to meet their needs.