
a *Grace Notes* course

Doctrines of the Christian Faith

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Doctrine 206

Mental Attitude
Occupation with Christ
Prayer

Grace Notes

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Doctrines of the Christian Faith
Doctrine 200, Lesson 6

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Mental Attitude

Introduction

As a believer progresses in his Christian life, he experiences many profound changes in his thinking. His standards change gradually but radically; his frame of reference changes; his mental attitude soon becomes very different from what it once was. His previous way of thinking is replaced by the "mind of Christ" - God's viewpoint is becoming his own.

The greatest occupational hazard faced by a Christian is the failure to grow in Christ. Persistent personal sin carried on without repentance and confession keeps the Christian out of fellowship with the Lord and hinders the work of the Holy Spirit in the life.

The normal Christian life is a supernatural life. This life cannot be lived apart from the daily intake of spiritual food, the sustenance which comes with the study of the Bible accompanied by the continuous control and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Inattention to the teaching of the Word of God concerning the mechanics of daily Christian living results in failure to grow in Christ. The believer who will not overcome these problems will not be able to enjoy the benefits and blessings of the Christian life, and he will certainly not be productive as a child of God.

This article reviews several factors relating to the subject of the believer's mental attitude. First, we note several categories of mental attitude sin which are the result of "not thinking Grace". Then we see the methods by which God arranges for human viewpoint thinking to be replaced with divine viewpoint thinking. This study will also show some of the important results in the life of the Christian who develops a godly mental attitude.

The Sin of Not Thinking Grace

A Christian decides many times every day whether he will follow God's plan for his life. In decisions great or small he expresses either his dependence on the Lord or his desire to be independent of God's direction. A believer has access to the perfect plan of God for his life, a plan which has

certain predetermined divine standards by which every situation can be measured, by which every decisive opportunity can be judged. Many promises and blessings are available for use by the person who orders his life according to the patterns laid out in the Bible.

The person who is not positive to the plan of God, and who would apply his own human standards to life situations, does not operate by divine standards. He becomes involved in a variety of mental attitude sin problems stemming from his original decision to be independent of God. His life takes on the characteristics of one who does not "think Grace".

Grace is that characteristic of God which is an extension of His love for the human race and which causes Him to provide for every human need for time and eternity. The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was the Work which made it possible for God to view every person as free from the guilt of sin and as an object of God's Grace provisions.

Failure to order one's thinking according to Grace involves several aspects of mental attitude sin, including the following :

A SPIRIT OF PRIDE -- this is an exalted feeling based on personal success or position, or based on good training or education, on personal appearance, or on some natural gift or ability. Sinful pride is an inner feeling of self-importance which does not take into account God's provision of every resource and quality which goes into one's human traits and capabilities.

LOVE OF, OR DESIRE FOR, HUMAN APPROBATION AND PRAISE -- this is a secret fondness for being noticed and recognized. It is a love of supremacy, or it is the drawing of attention to oneself by various types of exhibitionism or by spiritual one-upmanship.

SELF WILL -- this is the concept of the stubborn or unteachable nature, or implacability. Self will is a disposition to be argumentative, harsh, bitter, which causes one to be a "nit picker" or critical in the extreme, or to mind the business of others, or to fail to recognize the rights and privacy of others.

SINFUL REACTION TO SOCIAL PRESSURES -- these are the sins of anger, impatience, touchiness, or of having a sensitive nature. There is often resentment and retaliation when disapproved or contradicted. This area of sin generates jealousy, sour grapes, envy, and the accompanying bitterness, hatred, carrying of grudges, revenge tactics, and so forth.

Magnifying the faults and failings of others while emphasizing one's own virtues.

NEGATIVE DISPOSITION -- this is peevishness, a fretful disposition, one that loves to be coaxed and honored. It is a dishonest, deceitful attitude. It is a disposition that tends toward discouragement and despondency under pressure along with the attempt to solve one's problems by hysteria and tantrums.

APATHY -- this sin is that of indifference to doctrine and to the Word of God in general. It is indifference to the lost condition of unbelievers or to the carnal condition of other believers.

Characteristics of a Believer's Mental Attitude

The true character of a believer in Jesus Christ is determined by his mental attitude. Prov. 23:7, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he". See also 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:1; Heb. 12:3; Col. 3:1,2; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 10:4,5.

A Christian's mental attitude is not always apparent in his actions, but God always knows perfectly what a person is thinking. Heb. 4:12,13; Prov. 21:2. The following are examples of mental attitude thinking.

Worldliness is a mental attitude. Worldliness is not the doing of something wrong; it is the thinking which takes place independently of God's viewpoint. The remedy to the problem of worldliness is not in turning over a new leaf. It is a change in thinking (repentance) rather than a change in activity. Divine viewpoint must replace human viewpoint before a change in character can be expected. One can have an outward life which appears good, yet be filled with mental attitude sins. Col. 3:2; James 4:4.

Toughness, strength, and determination are mental attitudes. One is not beaten until he gives up mentally.

True Christian inner peace is a mental attitude. It is the relaxed mental state which enables one to enjoy the Christian life regardless of people or outward circumstances. With a good mental attitude, the believer can be joyful, relaxed, and can even enjoy the battle.

Mental stability is the result of thinking from a proper frame of reference, that is, Biblical thinking. The Christian who has mental fear, who is a chronic worrier, who cannot think clearly under pressure, who blames others for his problems, who cannot make correct decisions -- that believer is unstable. His emotions interfere with his thinking. Since emotion always follows thinking, emotional instability will always follow from incorrect (HVP) thinking. But God's Plan of Grace leads to rock-solid mental and emotional stability.

Man's Ideas vs Divine Viewpoint

Thinking requires words - vocabulary. Divine thinking requires divine vocabulary. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Under any kind of spiritual pressure, human vocabulary, or human thinking, is not adequate. Only God's words can give the ability to think correctly under pressure. The Christian's ability to think correctly is based on how much Bible teaching is resident (applied) in the soul of the believer.

The Christian is commanded to have a new mental attitude. Col. 3:1,2; 2 Cor. 10:4,5; 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5.

The warfare between two viewpoints in the believer's soul must be fought from within, first by knowledge of doctrine, and then by the application of truth to the life. 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 John 1:9.

Every believer has a mind which is capable of looking at life from God's point of view. Rom. 1:18 ff. Mental attitude divine viewpoint is obtained only through Bible study accompanied by the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Christian who habitually studies the Word learns to concentrate and to think from God's point of view, and thus he becomes stabilized. The "mind of Christ" (the source of God's viewpoint) is made clear in the Bible.

The Christian can be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" through study, knowledge, and application of Bible truth. By this means his decisions and actions are most likely to be in agreement with Bible principle. And this is the only sure sign of Christian maturity and victorious Christian living.

The Human Conscience

The conscience is located in the mind and is the center for the operating standards of the human soul. Titus 1:15. The conscience convicts the Christian of evil or wrongdoing. John 8:9. The conscience establishes standards for both human and divine relationships. Acts 24:16.

The conscience functions on thinking; and the believer in fellowship has a conscience which functions from resident (applied) divine viewpoint. Rom. 2:15; 9:1, as related to applied Bible teaching. The conscience establishes standards for serving God. 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14. But false operating standards in the conscience produce legalism. 1 Cor. 8:7.

The more the believer uses applied Bible doctrine, the stronger his conscience becomes in using such things as the Law of Liberty and the superseding laws of love and sacrifice. 1 Cor. 10:24-29. Conscience is the basis for enduring mistreatment and misunderstanding without defending oneself. 1 Pet. 2:19; 3:16. The conscience can be damaged or destroyed with false doctrine and with a callused soul. 1 Tim. 4:1,2.

The Mechanics of Replacing Human Viewpoint with Divine Viewpoint

The Christian life is a supernatural life and cannot be lived without the filling of the Holy Spirit and the daily function of applied Bible teaching. Rom. 8:2; 7:6; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 5:18. All changes must come from within, and the Holy Spirit must originate divine good by applying doctrine to the life.

We begin a change of viewpoint at the moment of salvation. At that time we changed our mental attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 3:19. That was repentance and faith, and it resulted in our regeneration. John 3:16. At that moment many benefits were made available to us, blessings

and promises from God which enable us to live in a manner which is both acceptable to the Lord and which also produces great happiness for us. We are given the ability to think those things which will bring honor to the Lord. Eph. 5:18; 4:23; Col. 3:2.

The choice of whether to make use of the divine operating assets is made by the believer every day. The power of our walk with the Lord depends on Bible teaching, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the believer's positive volition. Daily Bible teaching under the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit builds up divine standards in the human soul and conscience. 1 Tim. 1:5,19; 3:9.

The Benefits of Having a Proper Mental Attitude

With the proper mental attitude, the Christian will have victory, peace, power, and mental stability. Phil. 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:7. The Christian can experience perfect inner peace, even during times of difficulty and suffering. Phil. 4:7. Inner peace comes from what we think. Isa. 26:3. Divine viewpoint brings mental stability and eliminates discouragement, anxiety, instability, fearfulness, and double-mindedness. Stability of mind and character is a mental attitude of strength.

The believer with divine viewpoint has a gracious attitude toward others. He is a mature believer characterized by mental attitude love who is a channel of the Grace of God. Deut. 6:5; 11:13. A mental attitude from DVP produces confidences based on absolute values and standards. 2 Cor. 5:1,6,8.

Mental Attitude and the Believer's Ministry

The mature believer "thinks Grace", which is the "mind of Christ". Therefore, the Christian's life and personality are characterized by many of the qualities of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 5:22 ff. In every one of these characteristics the Christian has one basic ingredient - correct thinking according to divine viewpoint. 1 Pet. 3:8

Therefore, the mature believer is gentle, compassionate, caring, and has a gracious attitude toward others. These are essential life qualities in any believer who is a good witness for Christ.

With these qualities, and with the knowledge of the Word of God being acquired on the way to maturity, the believer cannot help but be an outstanding witness for Christ and a skilful practitioner in the use of his spiritual gifts.

Occupation with Christ

Introduction

The Lord has made available many provisions for living according to His plan and growing in Christ. These provisions are known variously as “divine operating assets”, “techniques for Christian living”, “problem solving devices”, and so forth.

These provisions are part of the great store of blessings which God has already made available to us in Christ.

Eph. 1:3, “And has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

These provisions include:

- Confession of Sin
- The Filling of the Holy Spirit
- Faith-Rest - the ability to trust God and to enjoy His peace
- Orientation to Grace
- Personal Love for God
- Impersonal Love for Mankind
- Joy - the happiness of God which does not depend on people, circumstances, or things
- A personal destiny shared with all in God’s royal family
- OCCUPATION WITH JESUS CHRIST

This article deals with the subject of Occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ, under the following headings:

- What is Occupation with Christ
- Why a Christian Needs to be Occupied with Christ
- The Bible Commands Regarding Occupation with Christ
- Mechanics - How to be Occupied with Christ
- The Results of Occupation with Christ

What is Occupation with Christ

Occupation with Christ is a mental attitude by which a Christian believer views all things in life with the Lord Jesus Christ in mind.

Occupation with Christ is love for the Son, the 2nd Person of the Trinity, therefore it is the expression of love for God. The Bible commands us to love God, with all our heart, soul and mind. Being occupied with Christ is a great part of our love for God. Therefore, this concept is one of the most important spiritual functions in the Christian life.

Love for God, and Occupation with Christ, results from learning, digesting, and applying Bible truth. The Bible describes the lifestyle of wisdom and the path to spiritual maturity through the filling of the Holy Spirit and growth in Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is invisible to us because He is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. He will not become visible to us until we see Him when He returns. So, loving Christ requires a system of communications which is based on thought. The system is the Word of God, God’s thoughts and God’s words, guarded in the Scripture. There is no other accurate record of the mind of Christ, divine viewpoint, apart from what is contained in the Bible.

Therefore, we can only come to love Jesus Christ, to be occupied with Christ, through learning the Word of God and making His thoughts our thoughts.

1 Cor. 2:16, For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

This love for Jesus Christ can only come about through applied Bible truth.

Eph. 3:19, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

1 Pet. 1:8, and though you have not seen Him, you love Him [occupation with Christ], and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

Joy and occupation with Christ always go together, you can’t have one without the other. The glory with which you are filled is Bible truth,

and this emphasizes the fact that you have come to know Christ through perception and application of the Word of God.

Difference Between Indwelling of Christ and Occupation with Christ

The Indwelling of Christ is not an experience. Every Christian, whether a novice or advanced believer, is indwelt by Christ, has been since the point of salvation, and always will be. You find this teaching in John 14:20; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; and 1 John 2:24.

Christ indwells believers for a number of reasons: (1) as a sign that a Christian is a member of God's royal family, (2) as a guarantee of the blessings which we have for time and eternity, (3) as a guarantee of eternal life and a life after death in the presence of God, (4) as a motivation for us to stay in the plan of God, especially when we experience suffering.

Occupation with Christ, though, is one of the processes leading to Christian maturity, and not all believers experience this. Occupation with Christ is the focus of all worship. When you worship God "in spirit and in truth" you are occupied with Christ.

Occupation with Christ is the main motivation in a Christian's life. And it is the prime solution to all the problems of life. Only positive believers who choose to follow the plan of God are occupied with Christ.

The following are expressions of the process of being occupied with Christ. Notice in each case how the Christian is involved in a thought and decision process leading to occupation with Christ.

"Christ being formed in you..." (Gal. 4:19)

"Christ at home in your hearts..." (Eph. 3:17)

"Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20).

Occupation with Christ makes an issue out of knowledge of the Word of God, setting right priorities, being involved and active in the plan of God, and glorifying God during a Christian's lifetime.

Characteristics of Occupation with Christ

1. Jesus Christ is God; so, occupation with Christ is the greatest expression of love toward God, the objective of all Christians.
Deut. 6:5, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart..."
2. Occupation with Christ becomes the means for making great decisions with an impact on history.
Heb. 11:27, "Moses gave up the crown of Egypt. He became strong under pressure, for he saw the invisible One."
3. Occupation with Christ begins as the believer moves toward spiritual maturity, Col. 3:15-17.
4. Occupation with Christ glorifies Him, Eph. 3:17-21
5. Occupation with Christ means that human beings are not raised on pedestals, Phil. 3:7,8.
6. The means of continuing to be occupied with Christ is the daily learning and application of Bible teaching while under the control of the Holy Spirit, Jer. 9:23,24.
7. Occupation with Christ is a pastor's prime motivation to teach the Bible so that believers grow in Christ, Heb. 6:10.
8. Occupation with Christ is related to victory in spiritual warfare with Satan and his angels. With your mind in the right place, you are confident of victory, Col. 3:1,2.

The Need for Occupation with Christ

Psalm 118:9 tells us, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes." If you take refuge in the Lord, you stop expecting things from people. Your fellowship with God solves the problems that you have with people, and makes your relationships with people far better.

A person is seldom treated the way he wants to be treated, or loved the way he wants to be loved. Outside of God's plan, this can cause frustration and instability.

This frustration becomes a major motivation in life and leads people on a frantic search for fellowship with people, instead of fellowship with God. Until a person becomes stabilized in his thinking, by

occupying himself with Christ, he will be very unstable. People select their companions, their spouses, even their churches, based on the desire to be loved and treated properly.

Most of the time, people don't find what they are looking for, so they become bitter, and indulge themselves in jealousy, envy, vindictiveness, hatred, and revenge, and are very disappointed in all categories of life.

Occupation with Christ brings about a change in priorities in a Christian's life. Proper focus on Christ takes care of the problems of friendships, romance, marriage, business, or social life, and the problems that are caused by constant friction with people in all situations. Love for God and for Christ takes the place of frustration and bitterness with people.

Impersonal love, which is the professional attitude of a mature believer toward all people, provides a capacity for wonderful relationships with people in Christian fellowship, friendship, and marriage.

The Problems of Focusing on Self, People, Things

Jer. 17:5,6 Thus says the Lord, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be like a bush in the desert, and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant.

Three great problems develop through failure to be occupied with Christ. The first problem is to have a focus on self. This is arrogance, or an overestimation of one's self. When you are indignant, or offended, or angered by the way you are treated, your eyes are on yourself. You are frustrated and bitter, and you become vengeful. You make bad decisions from a position of weakness.

The second problem of wrong focus is to have one's eyes on people. We tend to put our trust in people in many different relationships. We think people are causing our problems, and we look to other people to solve our problems. We try to find people who are compatible, but are always be disappointed in them.

There is nothing wrong with having relationships with people. In fact, they are unavoidable. But we will always be disappointed by people until we have a personal love for God, occupation with Christ, and an impersonal love for all people. This spiritual outlook is the source of pure joy and the enjoyment of a personal sense of eternal accomplishment.

You can't change other people, even your spouse. When you try, it only intensifies the problem. What you are doing is making an issue out of yourself instead of Christ's teaching. The only person you can change is yourself; and you cannot do that by executing some sort of psychological program for your life. Personal change comes only through growth in Christ and using the assets that God has provided for solving the problems of life.

The third problem caused by failure to be occupied with Christ is a focus on things. Sometimes when you're not being treated properly, you decide to sublimate in some way by buying something, going somewhere, seeking out recreation. If you can't get away, or you can't afford your dream package, you spend your life filled with fantasy or wanderlust.

Occupation with Christ provides a new focus on life, away from self, people, and things. When you have spiritual self-esteem, it doesn't matter how you are treated, whether you are loved or not loved, or whether you get what you want. It is your fellowship with Christ that counts!

God is perfect and can only treat you within the scope of His perfection. Within God's plan, you will be treated in a manner that is most beneficial to you, with the proper combination of pleasure and suffering, joy and sorrow, social life and solitude, a combination of blessing and testing to bring you to maturity.

So, how you are treated by people, or by life itself, is no longer an issue. You are living a life of love for Christ as your motivational solution. You have impersonal love for people as part of your functional integrity. The Lord gives you victory over hurt, anger, hatred, frustration, or antagonism toward people, even in the midst of some of the greatest expressions of frustration.

You have yourself been changed through the Word of God. You can pass all forms of testing without being destroyed. You are well positioned to conduct a powerful personal ministry for Christ, being free from the self-generated problems to which most people are subject.

The Bible Commands Us to be Occupied with Christ

Occupation with Christ is commanded by God; it is not an option. If you are going to live the Christian life according to God's plan, you must come to the place where you are occupied with Christ.

Deut. 6:5 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

This verse shows that it is God's will that we be absorbed with Him in our whole being: heart, soul, and might. This means the Word of God must be our top priority. To love God - to love the Lord Jesus Christ - we must know Him. We learn about Christ, the Living Word, through the Bible, the written Word. The written Word and the Living Word eventually become our main focus in life. A Christian cannot enter spiritual adulthood (maturity) without this dual priority in life.

Christians who are not occupied with Christ will always be novices, spiritual immature, and dabblers in the faith.

Heb. 12:2, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith (our doctrine). Furthermore, the Bible is the "mind of Christ", the actual thinking of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16)

The word "joy" in Heb. 12:2 refers to the happiness of the Lord Jesus as he endured the suffering of the Cross, when He was being judged for our sins. We don't usually think of happiness associated with Christ's suffering, but this was the pure joy, in Christ's case, of his being 100% occupied with the Father and with His plan.

1 Pet. 3:15, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

This verse is a command to be occupied with Christ. The "heart" is the place in the soul where wisdom and applied Bible knowledge reside. We "sanctify" Christ in our hearts by having maximum understanding and application of Bible truth. By consistent learning of the Word, under conditions of spiritual fellowship (control of the Holy Spirit), a believer sanctifies Christ as Lord in the heart.

Mechanics - How To Be Occupied with Christ

You have probably already seen that occupation with Christ is accomplished through having regular interaction with the Word of God. The #1 priority is concentration on Bible truth, and organizing one's life around that #1 priority. When you do that, you are concentrating on Christ, you are occupied with Christ.

To concentrate on the Word, it is very important to receive consistent accurate teaching from a Bible teacher. In Eph. 4:11-16, we see that the method God the Father has chosen to bring us to maturity as individuals, and to have a mature, productive church, is Bible teaching from men who are prepared to minister (preach) the Word of God.

You must listen and learn many things from the Bible. Some of them will seem to have no immediate application, but all Bible knowledge is important in God's plan for your life. If you stay with it, the pieces will begin to fit together and it will all make sense.

If your top priority is Bible truth, your life will begin to change almost without your knowing it. You will learn doctrine every day, and you will begin to use the problem solving techniques that the Bible offers. Your mental attitude will be determined by the divine thinking that is coming into your soul.

When the Word of God is the main focus of your life, you come to the point of personal love for God the Father. You will have spiritual self-esteem. Once you begin to have love for God, and to be occupied with Christ, you will no longer feel

threatened by things in life that once disturbed you. You have a relaxed mental attitude and spiritual joy, which is happiness supplied by God that you have regardless of circumstances, things, or the people in your life. This process is demonstrated in 1 Peter 1:6-8.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

that the proof (genuineness) of your faith (doctrine), being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

and though you have not seen Him (Jesus Christ), you love Him (occupation with Christ), and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

In other words, you begin to function by using the Word of God during times of testing, at the same time as you are occupied with Christ. You are actually sharing the happiness of God as you go through life.

The Results of Occupation with Christ

Occupation with Christ is the principal solution to all problems that occur in life. God the Father has provided us with everything necessary for us to have a capacity for joy and a prosperity that is independent of people or circumstances. These provisions are known as “all blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Note that the place of blessing is in Christ. All blessings, and all problem solutions begin with Occupation with Christ.

Occupation with Christ glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 3:19-21)

Occupation with Christ is required in order to have complete fellowship with God the Father. I John 1:6. Walking “in darkness” is the opposite of occupation with Christ.

In 2 Cor. 13:14, the “practice of truth” is fellowship with God the Father; and fellowship with God always leads to love for God.

I Cor. 1:9 indicates that fellowship with Christ is concurrent with, and necessary for, fellowship

with God. Since you were “called into fellowship with His Son,” this should be your main priority in life. But this means that you have to make the Word of God your main interest in life.

Fellowship with God the Holy Spirit is also closely tied in with occupation with Christ. Phil. 2:1,2 “Therefore, if there be any encouragement in Christ, if there is any comfort of love, if there is any fellowship with the Spirit, if there is any affection mercies, complete my happiness by thinking the same things.”

God’s happiness is completed as we have fellowship with Him, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Then we can have true fellowship with people, without putting people before God. 2 Cor. 13:14 “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love for God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” But without occupation with Christ, interaction with other people is often bad.

Occupation with Christ, therefore, eliminates the superficiality of human hero worship. Phil. 3:7,8 “...I count all things but loss except for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...”

As you become occupied with Christ, you have a stronger motivation to have a relationship with the Lord, and you change gradually from dependence on people to dependence on the Lord. You cannot change people; it is God who causes people to change, to grow up. And no one is fully grown up who is not making use of occupation with Christ. The key to God’s plan is that we no longer live for ourselves but for Christ.

2 Cor. 5:14-17 For the love of Christ continues to motivate us, in that One died for all; therefore, all have died. And He died as a substitute for all, in order that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and was resurrected...

Occupation with Christ brings spiritual self-esteem and self-confidence. You have self-esteem when you stop competing with people and undermining them. You stop slandering, gossiping, maligning, and judging other people. You have impersonal (professional) love for other people, because you are occupied with Christ. You live in grace, and you are a conduit of grace to other people, because

Christ has become formed in your thinking and you love Him above everything else. The result is 2 Cor. 5:14 “The Lord for Christ motivates...”

Occupation with Christ is the Basis for Production and Blessing

- It is the means by which mature believers contribute to national blessing (blessing by association). Deut. 30:15-20.
- It produces courage and victory in battle, Jer. 23:10,11.
- It is the basis for strength during testing, Psalm 31:23,24.
- It results in great blessings, Psalm 37:4,5.
- It provides strength under pressure, Heb. 11:27.
- It helps the Christian avoid fatigue in the soul, Heb. 12:3.

Summary Remarks

Occupation with Christ is the ultimate function and outlook of the Christian way of life. It is the only answer to unrealistic expectations in life, which include not being treated the way you think you should be treated, and not being loved the way you think you should be loved.

Occupation with Christ is the main problem solving feature of Christian living, and it is the key to all other solutions which God’s plan provides.

Occupation with Christ proceeds through three phases as the Christian grows in Christ. First, “Christ is formed in you”, Gal. 4:19. As a result, “the love for Christ motivates us.” 2 Cor. 5:14

Second, occupation with Christ is characterized as “Christ at home in your hearts”, Eph. 3:17, resulting in “setting apart the Lord Christ in your hearts”, 1 Pet. 3:15.

Third, in spiritual maturity, “Christ is exalted in my body, whether by life or by death,” Phil. 1:20. The result “for me, living is Christ and dying is profit,” Phil. 1:21.

Phil. 3:7-10, “Whatever things were gain to me, I have concluded them loss for the sake of Christ, I conclude all things to be loss because of the surpassing greatness of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, because I have suffered

the loss of all things, and I now consider them dung in order that I may gain Christ. And that I may be demonstrated in Him, not having my own righteousness from the law, but that righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God by faith in Christ. That I may know Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to Christ in the fellowship of His death.”

Prayer

Prayer is the expression of man's thoughts to God the Father. The Bible, God's Word, is the expression of God's thoughts to mankind. Therefore, human beings can have two-way communication with the almighty God.

Prayer is an extension of the Faith-Rest principle - it is a part of the Grace principle of claiming promises from the Bible. Here are some of the principal passages dealing with prayer:

- Psalm 116:1,2
- Isaiah 65:24
- Jeremiah 33:3
- Matthew 7:7
- John 14:13,14; 15:7**
- Philippians 4:6
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Principles of Prayer

Prayer is for Christian believers only. One can address God as Father only as a member of the family of God. John 1:12; Gal. 3:26

Prayer should be directed to God the Father. Eph. 5:20; Matt. 6:9; 1 Peter 1:17

Prayer should be made in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. John 14:13: 15:16

The power for prayer is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Eph. 6:18 Prayer is never made to the Holy Spirit.

Four Parts to Private Prayer

The first part of private prayer is the confession of personal sins. This makes it possible for the Lord to respond to the other parts of the prayer, because

the believer is in fellowship when he prays. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. See also 1 John 1:6-10.

Next, thanksgiving should be made to express appreciation to God the Father for His blessing and provision. Eph. 5:20

Then, prayer should be made for others (intercession). Eph. 6:18

Finally, it is in order to pray for one's own needs. Heb. 4:16

Reasons Why Some Prayers Are Not Answered

Sometimes God does not respond to prayers from believers, no matter how heartfelt and earnest that prayer might be. The main reason that this communication is hindered is carnality on the part of the one praying. When a Christian is not walking in fellowship, the only prayer that God will answer is that of confession. When confession is made, the Lord provides cleansing, according to the provisions of 1 John 1:9, at which time further prayer can be made. There are many reasons given in the Bible why some prayer is not answered:

- Lack of faith: Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24; Rom. 14:23; James 1:5-7
- Failure to take in Bible teaching (lack of edification): Prov. 1:24-31; Prov. 28:9; Zech. 7:11-13
- Selfishness: James 4:2,3
- Carnality: Psalm 66:18; Micah 3:4; Isa. 1:15; 59:1-3**
- Lack of compassion: Prov. 21:13
- Lack of harmony in the home: 1 Peter 3:7
- Pride and self-righteousness: Job 35:12,13
- Lack of control of the Holy Spirit: Eph. 6:18
- Lack of obedience: 1 John 3:22; Eph. 5:18; Deut. 1:43-45**; 1 Sam. 14:37; 1 John 5:14

Four Ways Prayers are Answered

Many times we pray for things because we think that what we ask for will bring happiness to ourselves or to someone else. The petition may be for some specific detail of life such as good health, money, or success in some enterprise. But the

desire is for something less tangible, perhaps, like prosperity or happiness. Often the Lord will answer prayer by granting the unstated inner desire, without granting the petition directly. Sometimes we get everything we ask for, sometimes nothing. Here are the four methods which God uses to answer prayer.

Petition Granted; Desire Not Granted

"And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." Psalm 106:15

In Numbers 11 is the story of the Israelites wanting meat to eat. Their petition for meat was granted; but their desire for a pleasant experience was not answered.

In 1 Samuel 8, the children of Israel asked for a king. They did not want to continue under God's personal rule. Their petition, to have a king, was granted. Their desire, to be like other nations and to have peace, was not granted. Instead, they had strife and civil war as long as Saul was their king.

Petition Not Granted; Desire Granted

In Genesis 17:18, Abraham asks that Ishmael might be his established heir. His petition was denied; but his desire for a son and heir was later granted in the birth of Isaac.

In Genesis 18, Abraham prays for God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah. His request was denied; but his desire, that Lot and his family be safe, was granted.

See also 2 Cor. 12:7,8**

Petition Granted; Desire Granted

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah prayed that God would destroy the altar on which offering had been made to Baal. His desire was that God would be glorified. His petition and desire were granted.

Samson asked God to strengthen him so that he could have vengeance on his Philistine enemies. Both petition and desire were granted. But God had already decided to judge the Philistines.

One of the thieves on the Cross petitioned Christ, "Remember me..." His desire was for salvation. Both his petition and his desire were granted.

Both Petition and Desire Denied

Refer to an earlier section on the reasons why prayers are not answered for information as to why God sometimes does not grant either the petition or the desire.

Conclusion

The Lord uses a variety of means to bring about those things we desire for ourselves and for others. However, His responses take into account His knowing all there is to know about every situation and what is best for everyone concerned. His answers are sometimes obvious, but at other times they are quite subtle. When the believer is aware of the various ways God answers prayer, he is better able to recognize the answers to prayer.

As an example, we might pray that a person be healed from some illness, not knowing why God has allowed that illness to occur in the first place. But our desire is that the sick person be happy, be prosperous, and be free of discomfort and pain. The person may remain ill, in spite of our prayers; yet God might make the Word of God more available to that person; and in his sick condition, the person may have more time to think on spiritual things. This could result in a great improvement in the growth of spiritual fruit in his life along with inner peace and prosperity. Therefore, one might see his desires realized while the actual prayer request seems to be unanswered.
