

Christ: The Object of Our Desire

by Chip Brogden

Having Christ as our desire means that we are satisfied in Him and cannot be dissatisfied.

Scripture: Genesis 3:16, Genesis 6:5, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 73:25, Matthew 6:33, Mark 14:1, Luke 7:36, Luke 10:38, Luke 22:42, John 12:1, Romans 7:19, Colossians 2:6, James 4:2

Topics: "Christ Centered", "Self Denial"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches about the importance of having Christ as the sole desire of the Church, emphasizing that our desires are often rooted in sin and selfishness. He highlights how our righteousness can be misguided and how we may unknowingly seek to please ourselves even in spiritual matters. Brogden stresses the need to daily die to self and follow Christ, just as we initially accepted His sacrifice for our sins. He warns against selfish desires in prayer and urges believers to have Christ as the center of their lives, finding contentment and fulfillment in Him alone.

Transcript

"...thy desire shall be to thy Husband, and He shall rule over thee (Genesis 3:16b)."

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee (Psalms 73:25)."

In the beginning God ordained that the Bride of Christ, the Church, should have its desire only for Christ. Our desires are very powerful. Men are pulled in many different directions and tossed about by many wants, perceived needs, desires, and influences. Initially our desires are sinful.

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5)."

God affirms throughout Scripture that the desire of man is evil and wicked from his youth (Genesis 8:21; Job 5:7, 14:1, et. al.) It is natural for us to think that once we become Christians that our spiritual desires are now good and holy, proper and pure, and that we are well pleasing to God (Luke 18:11). Nevertheless we soon discover that something prevents us from performing the good which we intend.

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do (Romans 7:19)."

And we also learn that our "righteousness" is often misguided.

"And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of (Luke 9:54, 55)."

We may find ourselves in competition with our brothers and sisters, attempting to be the most spiritual, or the most mature, or the most knowledgeable about the things of God. We privately, and sometimes publicly, compare ourselves with one another and estimate ourselves to be most advanced, when the truth of the matter is we are most fleshly.

"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest (Luke 22:24)."

"They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory (Mark 10:37)."

Thank God for the cross of Jesus Christ! For it is there that my sins are forgiven; it is there that the "old man" died. Yet it is also true that there is something as wicked, if not more wicked, than sin, and that is Self. It is true that every sin is rooted in Self. As we must initially accept His death for sin, so we must daily accept our death to Self. As we are once crucified with Him for the remission of sins, so we must daily take up the cross, deny our Self, and follow Him. We walk in the narrow Way just as we entered the narrow Gate - by way of the cross. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him (Colossians 2:6)."

MANY SPIRITUAL DESIRES ARE SELFISH

The disciples of the Lord desire many things. Some desire power over the enemy, or power to work miracles in the Name of Jesus. Others desire freedom from sickness or oppression. Many desire blessing upon the work of their hands, their ministry, or their finances. Some desire wisdom and understanding in spiritual matters.

How surprising it is then for the child of God to learn that the Lord does not necessarily approve of these many desires, even though they seem undeniably good and proper at first. Why? Because Self remains enthroned and enshrined in the sanctuary of our heart. Why do we desire power? That we may glory and others may take notice. Why do we desire freedom from sickness and oppression? Because we are ready to reign with Christ, but are not prepared to suffer with Him. Why do we desire the blessing upon our labor? That we may appear successful before men. Why do we desire wisdom in spiritual affairs? That others may count us wise and seek us out for our opinion and counsel. When we do not know what spirit we are of, Self is most definitely the root of all our asking and praying.

"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (James 4:2,3)."

Verse two of James chapter four speaks of how man goes about to secure his sinful desire. Verse three speaks of how man goes about to secure his spiritual desire. In the first case we try to get by taking from others. In the second place we try to get by asking from God. We know it is wrong to lust, kill, and fight for what we want. This is sin. But many of us do not yet know that to ask God for what WE want is sin also - the sin of Self. This is why we do not receive what we ask for, because we desire to please ourselves. We "ask amiss."

Jesus never pleased Himself.

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done (Luke 22:42)."

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30)".

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (John 6:38)."

How much of our prayers, intercessions, asking, knocking, seeking, searching, and hoping is done with a view towards getting God to do what WE want Him to do? I am afraid that we take this approach with God: we carefully analyze the situation, determine what we want to see come to pass, look up the appropriate Bible verses, go to God and tell Him exactly what we want to happen and by when, and then become anxious if He fails to answer us according to our own thought.

Brothers and sisters, this is not the way we approach the Lord. Many are the instances in which mere humans tried to instruct the Lord Jesus, rebuked Him, found fault with His way of doing and saying things, questioned His methods, and argued with Him. Let us not fall into the same trap. For the Lord knows His business, and does not need to be instructed by us. Instead, we must follow His instruction and allow Him to become our only Desire. Then our praying and asking amiss will cease.

How do we deny Self and have the appropriate desire? The solution is quite simple, but it is not simplistic. It is profound, but not complicated. God has ordained that our "desire shall be to [our] Husband, and He shall rule over Thee." God in Christ fills all in all (Ephesians 4:6). Jesus is the only legitimate desire a Christian can have (Psalms 73:25). If He is the center and focus then all other things will take their proper place (Matthew 6:33). If we are satisfied in God, we cannot be dissatisfied. If our need is fully met in Christ, we cannot experience lack.

"Because the Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need! (Psalms 23:1, Living Bible)."

This is a difficult truth to pass along. I find myself inadequate to explain how it works in the life of a believer. So let us look to the Scriptures for light, and may we learn to have Christ as the object of our desire.

THE "SINFUL WOMAN" AND THE PHARISEE

Luke 7:36-50 records the story of a "certain woman" who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, wiped them off with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with precious ointment. Please read the entire passage of Scripture and see how broken and honest was her adoration of Christ.

Now observe the thought of the Pharisee who sat at meat with Jesus. As this spirit and truth worship unfolds before his very eyes he has but one thought: if this Man were a prophet, He would know that this woman is a sinner. In other words, Jesus should not allow this sinful woman to touch Him and pour forth so much love upon Him. The Pharisee judged that Jesus was not worthy of such love and was offended at this outpouring of affection.

MARY AND MARTHA

In Luke 10:38-42 we find the story of Mary and her sister Martha. Martha invited Jesus to her home and commenced to make preparations for dinner. But instead of helping her sister, Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His Word. Upon seeing this, Martha expresses her irritation at Mary for not helping, and at Jesus for not telling her to help.

She says, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me (verse 40)." Not only is Mary wrong, but Jesus is wrong to permit this situation. Such is Martha's thinking.

MARY AND JUDAS ISCARIOT

Mark 14:1-9 as well as John 12:1-9 recalls a crucial episode in the earthly ministry of Christ the week before His death and resurrection. From piecing together both records of the same event we have a complete account of all that happened. Again there is a supper. Again Martha is serving. But her sister Mary does a strange thing: she pours expensive perfume on the feet of Christ and wipes them with her hair, then pours some of it on His Head. The perfume is very costly, at least several month's worth of wages. Everyone there expressed indignation at this apparent waste of resources - the guests as well as the disciples agreed this was a foolish thing to be done. It wasn't "good stewardship." As the one in charge of the money bag, Judas Iscariot rebuked Mary and wondered aloud why she didn't instead sell the ointment and give the money to the poor.

THREE ILLUSTRATIONS, ONE LESSON

The Spirit has now given us three separate events in the life of Jesus in order to teach us something - may we have ears to hear it. What says the Spirit? Simply this: many are they who will sit at meat with Jesus, commune and dine with Him, discuss spiritual things with Him. But they cannot and will not lower themselves to wash His feet. They will not humble themselves to the ground and listen, they would rather be "much serving". They will not give up their "ministry to the poor" in order to "waste" themselves on "just ministering" to Jesus. They long to be seen fellowshiping with the Lord, but they are loath to pour out too much of themselves for Christ.

Note well that in all three cases there is food and drink - this speaks of fellowship. In all three cases the action is centered around the feet of Christ - this speaks of submission. Christ deems submission to be greater than fellowship. In all three cases, the one who made Christ their only desire was criticized as being too sinful, too lazy, or too wasteful. In all three cases they not only found fault with the worshipper but found fault with Christ. In all three cases Christ rebuked the rebukers; the Pharisee, for not loving Him enough; Martha, for being too anxious over the details; Judas and the disciples, for not having their priorities straight (and we discover that Judas is a thief and didn't care about the poor anyway).

Let us also note that at no time was this worship spoiled with a request or a prayer of petition. Self is completely swallowed up in worship. Indeed, no word is spoken, there is only acquiescence to Christ. There is no unmet desire, for the desire has been replaced with Christ. Having Him, they are content. Their humility is not found in despising Self, but in not looking at Self at all. The focus is outward, onto Christ, and thus there is not room left for considering Self. Therefore, there is nothing more to be said, no defense to offer the critics, nothing more to be done. Jesus instead points out that "only one thing is needful". Out of the "many things" that Martha was busy doing for the Lord, she was not praised for her work. Instead, Mary was deemed to have chosen "that good part." Was it wrong to be much serving the Lord? No, but the "good part" was to be with Him, not to work for Him, and the "good part" of sitting at His

feet was not to be forsaken in favor of the work.

Finally, all three instances involve women as a type of the Bride of Christ, the overcoming Church, whose desire is for her Husband, who has submitted to His rule.

FORSAKE THE WRONG AND CRUCIFY THE "RIGHT"

We know we must leave sin because we can appreciate how horrible it is. We do not so quickly leave "our righteousness" because we think somehow it has been "purified". Mark well however that God does not fix the old man, but destroys it. He does not tell us to clean up our life, but to lay down our life. It is not enough to forsake the wrong: we must allow Him to crucify the right. That is, we must learn to hate our thoughts that we may have His mind. We must give up our "spiritual" desires in order to have Christ as All.

We must allow our Husband to rule, and our desire must only be for Him. Some people want a "Prenuptial Agreement" with their Husband. That is, they are willing to come to Jesus, but they are not willing to bring all they have to Him, to have everything put in His Name, to forsake all others until death do they part. They are foolish virgins. They want the benefits of the bed chamber without the responsibilities of the bride. They say, "I will follow You wherever You go," but at the last minute they want to "go back and say goodbye" to those in their house.

The Pharisee thought it was enough to have Jesus over for dinner and talk about God. Martha thought it was enough to be much serving and preparing. The disciples thought it was enough to use a little perfume on Jesus but save the rest of it for the poor. On the surface it would seem they are correct, but Jesus shows us a more excellent way. We must deny ourselves, but we must never deny Him. With Him, we can never say, "Enough." He is worthy of all, nay more than all, more than we have: so He should receive all that we have, all that we are.

May Christ be the object of our desire. Amen.

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