

PORTRAIT OF A CHRISTIAN (2)

Seeking what Christ seeks

A. Introduction¹

1. What kind of people ought we to be? What kind of people are we called to be like?

These are questions that are explicitly and implicitly asked in the New Testament, and the answers given generally focus on our character rather than our conduct.

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:1-2)

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." (2 Peter 3:11-12)

God is more concerned about our who we are (what our hearts are like) than what we say or do.

Because right conduct will come from having a right character, in the same way wrong conduct comes from having a wrong character.

Because right conduct can deceive others into thinking we have a right character.

2. Those whom Jesus saves, He promises will be changed by His Holy Spirit, as they given new hearts and transformed into His likeness.

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Romans 8:29)

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

3. So, what kind of people ought those who have experienced this work of the Holy Spirit be?

What character traits will be found in them?

"Christian character is an internal nature conformed to Christ in five different areas, resulting in a variety of virtues." (Andrew Davis)

What are these five areas?

- a) Affection – what you love and what you hate.
- b) Desire – what you seek.
- c) Will – what you choose and what you reject.
- d) Thought – what you think.
- e) Emotions – what you feel.

4. Followers of Jesus love what Christ loves and hates what Christ hates.

¹ This series is based upon Chapters 11-16 of An Infinite Journey by Andrew Davis

They also seek what Christ seeks.

They have desires which are patterned after God's.

5. What does God desire or seek?

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers that Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

Christ, the perfect image of God, is the true worshipper of God.

"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.'" (Hebrews 10:5-7)

And His great desire was that the sinners become true worshippers of God.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)

"And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15-16)

6. Sinners saved by Jesus are transformed into true worshippers of God.

When they are given a new heart and the process of transformation into Christ's likeness by the Holy Spirit begins, as well as their affections changing, so do their desires.

Before, their desires were evil.

"All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts." (Ephesians 2:3)

"For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world." (1 John 2:16)

"...but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:14-15)

Now, they have been given new desires by the Holy Spirit.

"And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Romans 5:5)

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16)

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11-13)

And they will grow in these Christlike desires, and battle with the help of the Holy Spirit against their old sinful desires.

B. Knowing these new desires

1. You'll have a desire for Christ's God.

"When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me

with your counsel, and afterwards you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." (Psalm 73:21-26)

"One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple." (Psalm 27:4)

"Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." (Exodus 33:18)

There will be a desire in followers of the Lord Jesus for an experience of God's presence and His blessing upon their lives.

"I long to dwell in your tent for ever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings." (Psalm 61:4)

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face towards you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

"This is the difference between what I call, the customary assurance of the child of God, and this extra-ordinary assurance. He [the Puritan Thomas Goodwin] describes a man and his little child, his son walking down the road and they are walking hand in hand. And the child knows he is the child of his father, and he knows that the father loves him, and he rejoices in that, and he is happy in it. There is no uncertainty about it at all. But suddenly the father, moved by some impulse, takes hold of that child and picks him up, fondles him in his arms, kisses him, embraces him, showers his love upon him and then he puts him down again, and they go on walking together." (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

2. You'll have a desire for Christ's righteousness.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing." (Romans 7:15-19)

There will be a desire in followers of the Lord Jesus to be holy and righteous like Christ is, even though we will never attain this in this life.

3. You'll have a desire for Christ's kingdom to come.

"Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." (Psalm 2:8)

"The LORD says to my Lord; "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." (Psalm 110:1)

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

"Your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." (John 17:24)

There will be a desire in followers of the Lord Jesus for Christ to return and establish His kingdom here on earth as it is now in heaven.

C. Showing these new desires

1. You'll strive to know God.

"If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:3-6)

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." (Ephesians 1:17)

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:7-11)

2. You'll strive to obey God.

"So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it." (2 Corinthians 5:9)

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14)

3. You'll strive to tell others about God.

"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation." (Romans 15:20)

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." (Romans 10:1)

"Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account." (Philippians 4:17)

...so that they are ready for Christ's return.

"Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." (Psalm 2:10-12)

D. Summary

1. One aspect of the portrait of a Christian is that they seek what Christ seeks.

They want to be true worshippers of God who know Him, obey Him, and want to see others come to know Him and obey Him.

We need to grow these new desires because our old sinful desires continue to battle against them.

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." (Galatians 5:16-17)

2. How then do we grow our desire for what it is that Christ seeks?

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)

By using the 'means of grace': Word, Prayer, and Fellowship.