

THE HEARTBEAT OF CHRISTIANITY

By Christian Equippers International

You have recently begun an exciting life long journey of relationship with God. II Corinthians 5:17 describes how completely our lives are changed in relationship to Him: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." The Holy Spirit entered our life at the point of receiving Christ as our personal Lord and savior and we were born again. Instantly the process of change began. He revealed Jesus to us and began to draw our hearts to Him. The Bible began to come alive with all of its revelation of our spiritual destiny and its practical wisdom for daily living.

There are many different aspects to living a full and enjoyable Christian life but we must keep our focus clear and simple: the heart of Christianity is cultivating the love relationship that He has initiated with us. The Bible is an historical record of a loving God revealing Himself to lost humanity and through His unfolding plan of redemption making a way for us to be brought back to our original calling to stand before Him, holy and without blame in love (Eph. 1:4). The Bible makes it clear that we can know the Lord with at least the same degree of intimacy that we can know any other person. The highest calling upon the life of every believer is to know Him. This call transcends every other imperative of the Christian commitment. The great commandment, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength (Mk. 12:30)," is not a demand upon our will to be demonstrated by outward works, but rather is a call to our hearts, an invitation to share in the affections for God that He has for us.

As revelation of the love that God has for us grows, our hearts will be increasingly captured and our desire to know Him will likewise increase, causing us to live a life in pursuit of deeper relationship. It is a knowledge of the Lord not just facts about the Lord that ultimately satisfies the longing soul. It is the fulfillment of knowing Him not just doing things for Him that fills us with the abundant life that Jesus promised us. The heart and life pursuit of the Apostle Paul modeled the genuine article of Christianity: "Yet I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.. .that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Phil. 3:8, 10)."

God's affection and desire for us is seen best in the infinite reduction of Himself through His son in the incarnation. Jesus Christ, the eternal majestic son of God, sovereign and holy, and existing in glory that is incomprehensible to human beings spanned the infinite gulf between the uncreated realm and the natural creation and entered this earth as a tiny baby in the womb of Mary. This was the

beginning of a life of identification with us that culminated in His death at calvary where He suffered the judgment and punishment for our sin. "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him (I John 4:9)." All of this was to bring our hearts and our lives into loving union with Him.

If we will fix our hearts on Jesus in unwavering focus and desire we will fulfill that for which we are called. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2)." A heart in pursuit of God will cultivate the prayer and meditation of the word of God that is so necessary to grow in our knowledge of Him. A focus on His abiding love for us will keep us from dwelling upon the sin and imperfections in our own lives that can drive us into the hands of self condemnation. A constant refreshing revelation of His love for us will create a passion to live for Him and the strength to resist the worldly temptations and spiritual attacks that seek to devour our soul. His love and grace for us will fill our hearts with love and grace for others, taking us beyond the destructive impact of personal offenses and disappointments that inevitably come our way. A life of communion with Him will keep us refreshed as we give ourselves in ministry and service.

In short, a pure loving heart to heart relationship with God must continue as our priority through all challenges and all seasons of our life. This is the bulls eye at which the arrow of our life must be shot. Everything else is peripheral and can be handled with this focus. It can be handled because the Lord is devoted to us and will honor our devotion and give us the grace and strength that we need to prevail over everything that comes at us. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him (II Chron. 16:9)." God cannot resist the loving devotion of the believer whose heart is set on knowing and pleasing Him. This is how we were created to live.

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