

CHRIST'S PURPOSE IN LIFE

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." John 4:34.

It is always interesting to gaze into the inmost spirit of a noble life, to peer into its chamber of imagery, to study its collection of motives, and to examine the raw material of its enterprise and ambitions. It is truly glorious to be permitted to gaze into the life and spirit of Christ. It is ours to look with reverent eyes into His spiritual consciousness, to see His affections, His desires, His sorrows, His joys and His hopes. Our text affords us one of these precious glimpses. It will help us to look into His statement, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

In the consciousness of our Lord there was a distinct sense of mission. He was not moving to and fro in uncertainty. He was not drifting among unknown currents to an unknown end. He was not spending His life in prospecting for a purpose, and just hitting upon it at the close. His purpose was known. He had received His commission, and He had accepted it readily. His consciousness was possessed by a sense of sovereign mission: "The will of him that sent me."

In the course of His journey through Samaria, Christ and His disciples arrived at Jacob's well near Sychar one day about noon. They were hot, tired, hungry and thirsty. Weary from the journey, Christ sat down on the parapet of the well to rest, while His disciples went into the village to buy food. It was their intention for all to eat and drink together as soon as they returned with the food. Ere long our Lord's reverie was interrupted by the arrival of a Samaritan woman, in great spiritual and moral need.

With remarkable wisdom and unusual tact Christ engaged this woman in conversation, much to her surprise. He quickly glided from the subject of the water from Jacob's well, with which He was refreshing His own parched lips and quenching His thirst, to the water which would be the life of her soul. Suggesting that the water which He would give her would satisfy the thirst of her soul, He aroused her desire for the living water. She exercised faith in Christ as her personal Saviour, whereupon her soul was saved and her life was transformed. In her joyous excitement she hastened home to tell others what Christ had done for her.

Having returned with the food which they had bought, His disciples urged Him to eat. His hunger and His thirst were gone, and He was vibrant with energy. When they urged Him to eat, He explained, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:32). Those materialistic disciples did not have the faintest idea about what their Lord was talking. They did not seem to know anything about spiritual food or sustenance for the soul. They thought He was talking about food for the body, but He was not doing anything of the kind. Therefore, Christ went on to explain, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He emphasized that the thing that strengthened and fortified and exhilarated Him was "to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." In other words, the doing of God's will, and the finishing of God's work, constituted His meat and His drink.

Our Lord thus expressed His glorious purpose in life. He told His disciples His object in living. His life was the triumphant accomplishment of that glorious purpose. No other ever came into this world for such a heavenly, heroic and sublime a purpose. Hear Him say in tones that still echo: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Christ did not drift aimlessly or stroll purposelessly across the field of human history. On the far-away skyline of His eternal horizon was a goal. Nothing, not even a cruel cross, could retard, halt, divert, intimidate, discourage or keep Him back from His destined aim. The doing of God's will and the finishing of God's work were the things that satisfied Christ's hunger and quenched His thirst.

Observation should convince us of the greatness of the ministry of a controlling purpose in life. Two things characterize one whose life is dominated by some supreme and all-controlling mission. First, he bears the characteristic of great decisiveness. His days are not fretted away in aimless wanderings and meandering explorations which do not yield any weighty product. The awareness of a great mission meets a man at the opening of his day, regulates his movements during the day and awaits him when he goes to rest. Second, he bears the characteristic of great delight. The sense of a great mission in life imparts an unfailing delight to any individual who has it.

There is not any tonic that is as stimulating as the clear, holy, inspiring, elevating and moving sense that you are pursuing the noble purpose and will of God for your life. It is better to be on the side of God and or right than to be popular, to be rich or to be famous. If one's life is to be worthwhile and useful, he must possess a commanding and worthy purpose. If a life is not ruled by an high and holy purpose, it will lack the traits of real life, which are earnestness and energy; it will lack the elements of real life, which are aim and action; and it will lack the desirable end of life, which is usefulness. Since purpose is life's motive power, a life without a purpose is doomed to failure.

Our wonderful Saviour and gracious Lord had a glorious purpose in His life. He concentrated everything on one great aim or goal, namely, doing the will of God and finishing His work. Every life should be rightly related to Christ. One's relationship to Him is the most vital one in life. One cannot fight life's battles and win life's victories without Him.

Can you honestly repeat these words of Christ? What is your meat and drink? What is the thing that satisfies you most? In what do you find your pleasure and your delight? Is it in self-indulgence and self-will, or is it in self-denial and surrender to the will of God? These are the alternatives. So often we are rebellious against the will of God. We do not find it easy to surrender and be what God wants us to be, and to do what He wants us to do. There is some point in your life in which you know that you are not surrendered to God. Maybe your conscience is troubling you about it even now while I am speaking to you. Maybe there is some evil practice or some sinful association in your life, which you know is contrary to the will of God, but you just won't get rid of it. Maybe God is calling you to some work which you do not want to do, and your stubborn will rebels against Him and His will for you. Maybe you are a working Christian, but the hill is steep and the going is hard, so you do not want to finish that which you have begun. Perhaps you have encountered many disappointments and discouragements, so you have been tempted to give up and quit. Let me urge you to believe that you can find your meat and drink in that very will of God against which you are now rebelling, and in that very work of God in which you have become so discouraged. It is in the doing of God's will, and in the finishing of His work, that your meat and your drink are to be found.

If there is some pocket of resistance in your life to the will of God, or if you are rebellious and defiant, you cannot enjoy happiness. Unfortunately, so many think that if they could have their own way they would be perfectly happy. Their dream of happiness consists of this, that their own wishes will be gratified, their own longings fulfilled and their own desires granted to them. This is all a mistake. A man will never achieve happiness in this way. Man does not become happy by setting up his own will against the will of God, but perfect happiness is found in the opposite direction, namely, in the complete subservience of one's own will and in asking that the will of God may be fulfilled in him. Whereas man says, "My meat is to do my own will," our Lord Jesus Christ says, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Heartaches and sorrows always grow from the roots of self-will. Christ found sustenance and delight through doing the will of God.

Each of us has been placed on this earth to conform to God's will in the performance of

some specific task. That we are here is evidence that God has a purpose for us. That we have special abilities and opportunities is evidence of the nature of that purpose, and it explains its character. Our tasks, for which our various talents of body, mind and spirit have fitted us, have come to us through the will of God. We must put the very best materials into the structure of our lives.

Why did Christ surrender to the will of God and do the work of God? Let me mention three reasons.

1. Christ was submissive to the authority of God.

Christ gave to God the Father the remarkable title of "Him that sent me." Our Lord was deeply conscious that He was on earth because God had sent Him down from heaven. Of course, it is true that Christ also said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). It is true that He came of His own free will, but in coming He said, "I come to do thy will, O God." He came because He was sent. He recognized the authority of God, and He was submissive to it. All through His life Christ was constrained by a sense of mission, that there was a will of God which He had come to accomplish, and that there was a work of God that He had come to perform. That accounts for these statements which He made: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30); and "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

In the experience of Christ, what was true of the will of God was also true of the work of God. He had a sense of tremendous urgency to fulfill the task that God, Who had sent Him, had given Him to do. He said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4). He persevered until He was hanging on the cross and spoke of the work which the Father had committed into His hands saying, "It is finished" (John 19:30). All along He was conscious that He was on a mission, that He had been sent, and that He had been given a work to do. He was willing and anxious to do it. He knew it was right to be submissive to God's will. Since God has created, sustained, preserved, redeemed, saved and blessed us, we, too, should do His will and engage in His work.

2. Christ was confident in the purpose of God.

Christ realized that there was a will to which He must conform and a work that He had come to accomplish. There was a divine purpose that He was fulfilling. Christ was confident that God's purpose for Him was one of consummate wisdom and love. He was obedient to God's will because He was confident in it. Confident that His agony in the garden of Gethsemane was in His Father's purpose, He prayed, "Not my will, but thine be done."

This should be true of us also. All of our obedience should arise out of faith in God. We obey God because we trust Him; and, if we are disobedient, it is because we are distrustful. Faith in God and obedience to Him are not unreasonable, but they are fundamentally reasonable in their very nature. It is reasonable to trust if you know the nature and the character of God. It is unreasonable to distrust or to disobey God. He is worthy of your faith and your obedience. He will never exploit either. He is your Father, and He loves you. It is the height of wisdom to obey God, and it is sheer folly to disobey Him.

3. Christ was satisfied with the will of God.

Christ made it plain that His meat was in doing God's will and His work. From our Lord we learn that it is right, reasonable and refreshing for us to obey our all-wise

and loving Father in heaven. Our meat is not in self-indulgence, but in the doing of God's will and the finishing of the work which He has committed into our hands. The reaping of an harvest is a costly thing. It is quite easy to give up when one encounters disappointment, discouragement and difficulty, but remember that Christ said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Let us not quit until we have done His will and finished His work.

After denying self, surrender yourself to the doing of the will of God and the work of God, for that is the only way to reveal self-fulfillment. There is no conflict between the purpose and the commandments of God. Only as we are obedient to the commandments and will of God in doing His work can we possibly fulfill the purpose of Him Who created us.

There is no misery in life equal to that of knowing that one is living outside the will of God. On the other hand, there is no joy like that of knowing that one is living according to God's will. A fish out of water is a miserable creature, because it is out of its element. An eagle in a cage is a pitiful and miserable sight. Why? Because the eagle is out of its element. God gave an eagle powerful wings and a highly complex flight mechanism to catch the currents of the air and to soar into the sky, and it is only in such a flight that the eagle can fulfill its destiny. Why? Because God made it so. Now a man in rebellion against the will of God is out of his element. God created man to love Him, obey Him and serve Him, and he can fulfill his destiny by conforming to the will of God for him. To be outside the will of God is to be as miserable as a fish out of water or an eagle in a cage. Full satisfaction is to be found only in obedience to the will of God. It is right, reasonable and refreshing for you to surrender to God's will and to do His work. That was the purpose of Christ in His earthly life, and none of us can ever improve upon the example which He set for us.