



## **Your Goal in Life**

### ***Have You Considered What You Want to Accomplish in Life?***

As a young pastor, I was surprised when I felt the Lord telling me that I was to be a pastor to the world. After my first year as a pastor and everything fell apart for me, it certainly felt ridiculous. And since, I have been the pastor of a tiny congregation in a city that is pretty much unknown in the rest of the world. Why would I think God would call me to be a pastor of the world. No one was telling me I was a great preacher and there was no following outside the people who were in our church. Yet, the calling was persistent, even if it seemed to fade into the background. Now, after more than two decades as a pastor I have had in the past two years several thousand people around the world contacting me personally asking for prayer and wanting to develop a relationship with me as their pastor. I cannot explain this other than the supernatural hand of God has brought this about. However, this has never been, and cannot be my goal in life. I am not a popular preacher by any stretch of the imagination but even if that were the case, it could not be ever my goal in life. Let me share what the Apostle John declares is my goal in life and yours too.

Few people give much thought to this declaration of John, perhaps because they either don't think it is possible or they have not set this as a high priority for them. It is however quite stark in its claim. **My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the righteous one. He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.** (1 John 2: 1-2 CSB) Did you catch that? John wrote this letter to you and me to eliminate our sinning. That is the goal John has for you and by extension, the Holy Spirit. He is setting up a framework for the elimination of sinning. John admits it might not happen but that is the goal. You have been designed through being born again to stop sinning. Here is my translation from the original Greek. **My little children, I am writing these things to you so you might not sin at any moment.** This is not some generalized call for a sometime improvement in morality. It is in fact the bold declaration that John has written what he did so that each time you come up against a temptation to sin, you will reject it and not rebel against God. The goal for your life is that each time you are tempted to sin, you don't.

Notice the connection made here! **You will not sin is the plan. But if you do, you have Jesus Christ who is the atoning sacrifice for your sins.** A criticism often made of Christianity is tied precisely to these two verses. Those who do not believe in the grace of God, who think it isn't fair, that a righteous and holy God would not allow for the forgiveness of sin develop a sort of unknown standard of how much sinning God would allow. Whether you are talking about Jehovah's Witnesses or Muslims or Hindus or any other followers of religions not built on the grace of God, they believe that God does not budge on some version of holiness they adhere to and that if you do not live up to it, you will be punished in some way after this life, either by being cast into hell, facing annihilation or of being reincarnated into some lower life form. None of these groups can ever articulate how good you must be to gain heaven or some other sort of reward of the afterlife. They just leave it up to God or gods to decide after the fact if you met your quota of good deeds or avoided enough badness to "make it."

This of course means you cannot have any real assurance of what you will face after you die. I am guessing that most of those who have no room for a God of grace block out any possibility that they have not been good enough to pass the test of God as that would be psychologically crippling. And as I have been told by those who work in hospice care, that is almost always the case for those dying without the God of grace. Christians come to the end of their days with a supernatural, confidence that Jesus Christ has given them eternal life. But how can anyone who has no faith in Jesus Christ for salvation be certain that it will "work

out” in the end? They can’t. There is no real hope of salvation in them, just wishful thinking based on the psychological mechanism we all employ that allows us magically to overlook most of the evil inside us and let slip from memory the bad we have done but with great mental agility remember vividly what we have done right. It is a well-attested fact in study after study that human beings think better of themselves and those they like than they should and worse of those they don’t like than is justified. We tend to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt when we do something wrong. “I didn’t mean to do it, or it’s not like me to do that”. Those we don’t like, we assume the worst of their motives even when they do something nice like compliment us or do us a favor. We are great at overlooking our sins but locking in on the good we do or try to do. It is human nature.

That leaves us with the great moral dilemma. If we are counting on God letting us into heaven because we have been good enough to make it, we should be very cautious about making that assumption. In fact if it falls to a god weighting our good and bad deeds on some sort of celestial balance of judgement, we are in serious trouble. Which brings us to grace. Grace is the mercy of God to actually pay the price for our sins...all of them. Not a single one left dangling over our heads. Grace is God refusing to just ignore the evil in us but with the ultimate magnifying glass seeing them all clearly and dying for each one that is there. Like a starving teenager who does not leave a single french fry in the bag, God leaves no sin behind. He died for them all and forgives every single one of them. You are not going to be shocked by a forgotten sin God suddenly uncovers when you stand before Him on the Day of Judgement. He will have died for every one of your sins, from what you deem the smallest and most insignificant to the most egregious and humiliating.

Next time we will look at the most frequently voiced complaint against the grace of God by those who want a god who weighs our deeds in a balance and keeps us guessing as to whether we have measured up to their god’s standard of excellence. For now, let us consider the ramifications of what we have in our salvation and that is the point John makes. You are being empowered by grace to sin less and less and even at times reject sinning altogether. Why is that? It is because you have the power of God living within you. You have Christ Himself joined to you and creating a new personality, a new you if you will. Before you are born again, it is just you figuring out everything and making moral decisions based on your conscience. Now though after you put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, it is a new story for you. It is what the Apostle Paul calls a mystery for the rest of the world. **God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** (Colossians 1:27 CSB) What the unbelieving world does not understand is that every person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior now has Him a part of them, so they are fully capable of turning away from sin and being good and holy every time. Let me share a prayer written by a born again Christian who rejected her Muslim religion and was brutally murdered by her brother just hours after she posted this poem online. She had Christ in her and the courage she had to face near certain death is not so astounding when you realize what power her new personality had as Christ and her together. *My tears are on my cheek and, Oh! The heart is sad. On those who become Christians, how you are so cruel? The Messiah says: “blessed are all the persecuted” And we for the sake of the Messiah bear all things. What is it to you that we are apostates? You will not enter our graves or be buried with us. Enough, your swords do not matter to me at all! Your threats do not concern me, and we are not afraid. By God, I am to death a Christian! O, my eye, cry for what has passed as a sad life, For I was far from the Lord Jesus for many years. O history record! And bear witness O witnesses! We are Christians walking on the path of the Messiah. Take from me this knowledge and not it well! Jesus is my Lord, and he is the best protector. I advise you to pity your state of being. Gaze upon your look of hatred, how hideous it is. Mian is brother of man, O Learned ones! Where is the humanity and love? And where are you? My last words I pray to the Lord of the worlds, Jesus the Messiah, the Light of Clear Guidance; Change their hearts and set right their discernment. May he spread love among you, O Muslims.* Sara Fatima in living showed how amazing it is to have Christ in you. In death she revealed the glory Christ makes of the life that trusts in Him. Walk in the Light of Jesus this week and shine!! Let the angels know sin has no hold on you and righteousness is the path you take.