

## **The Posture of the Christian life – Seeking**

Blaise Pascal, the philosopher said, "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves."

All men are seekers. The question is what they seek for and by what means. A Christian needs to be a wholehearted seeker of God.

We have been considering the Christian life in different sections – the priorities of the Christian life; the process of the Christian life; the position of the Christian life and, most recently, the posture of the Christian life. We've been seeing that if a Christian is to reach the priority of the Christian life, he has to live in the presence of God. To do that, he must understand his position in Christ, and maintain the right posture of heart before God – one of humility, repentance and submission.

To be in a right posture before God we need to do more than be humble, repentant and submissive to His will. These postures simply deal with our pride, sinfulness and self-will and get us into a posture where we are facing God and dealing with God as He is. More than anything else, we need to be seeking God in a joyful pursuit of His beauty. The Christian's life is a life of delighting in God, and therefore the posture of our hearts must be one of desirous pursuit of God Himself. Or to come back to the process of the Christian life, the great goal is communion with God. The other four stages – conviction, confession, cleansing and conformity to Christ are all means of restoring and growing communion. It is in communion with God that we come to know Him as ultimately reliable, desirable and valuable and so love Him wholeheartedly.

Just as humility comes when we live in God's presence and believe by faith that He is supreme; just as repentance comes when we live in His presence and believe by faith that He is holy and merciful; just as submission comes when we live in His presence and believe that He is Sovereign, so this posture of seeking God comes when we live in His presence and see Him as beautiful.

We do not often think of God as 'beautiful'. Nevertheless, the Bible describes God as beautiful .

**Psalm 27:4** <sup>4</sup> *One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.*

**Psalm 96:6** <sup>6</sup> *Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.*

**Job 40:10** <sup>10</sup> *Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and array yourself with glory and beauty.*

In fact, the word for 'glory' in the Old Testament also means 'beauty'. In many respects, the glory of God is His beauty. It is the sum total of all His excellence that shines forth in dazzling, breathtaking beauty. Therefore, if God's glory is the most important thing, then God's beauty is the most important thing.

What do we mean when we say that God is beautiful? We mean that God is beautiful in His character and nature, and manifestations of Him have always been the ultimate in perceivable beauty. That is, to understand the trustworthiness of God and His reliability is to see His beauty. To understand the magnificence of His character, how valuable He is and worthy of ultimate devotion, is to see His beauty. To recognise the sheer goodness and overflowing love is to see how delightful

he is, and to see His beauty. When God, who is the sum of all beauty, has appeared to human eyes, the sight has been dazzling.

**Ezekiel 1:26-28** *And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it.*

<sup>27</sup> *Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around.* <sup>28</sup> *Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.*

Now, think about your life. How do we respond to beauty? How do we respond to beauty in people, landscapes, scenery, music, or art? We love beauty for its own sake.

So we should pursue God simply for who He is. Beauty is pleasurable to behold. It delights our souls to encounter the most beautiful Person of all. The goodness and beauty of God motivates us to pursue and seek Him. Often God Himself is spoken of as a reward that we seek for His value and beauty.

**Hebrews 11:6** <sup>6</sup> *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

**Psalms 63:1-5** *A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.*

<sup>2</sup> *So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.* <sup>3</sup> *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.* <sup>4</sup> *Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.* <sup>5</sup> *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.*

**Matthew 13:44** <sup>44</sup> *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field*

If a person is pursuing God for His beauty, there is great joy and hope in the pursuit. Without the promises of His beauty and our satisfaction in Him, we would be 'weary and heavy-laden' in our obedience.

With all these promises in mind, we still need to ask: what does it mean to seek God? After all, haven't we already found Him in Christ?

We have certainly come to know God in Christ (I John 5:20). However, the Christian life is a life of pursuing more and more of the knowledge of God. We can never exhaust our knowledge of God's glory; therefore we are always to be seeking Him. Listen to Paul's prayer, and sense the idea of going deeper and deeper in the seeking and finding of the knowledge of God.

**Ephesians 3:16-19** <sup>16</sup> *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,* <sup>17</sup> *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,* <sup>18</sup> *may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height --* <sup>19</sup> *to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

What will it mean to 'find' God? What happens in the state of communion when we seek God and

He answers our seeking?

The Spirit will show you the nature of God in the Word, He illuminates us. As you listen to or read the Word with the posture of wholeheartedly seeking Him, God will open the eyes of your heart to see His glory in the Word. When God illuminates the truth, you are encountering God revealing Himself to you graciously. You see the beauty of his reliability, desirability and value. You see an example of this in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1

**Ephesians 1:17-19** <sup>17</sup> *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,* <sup>18</sup> *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* <sup>19</sup> *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power*

The Spirit also seeks to reveal God's Word to you as you go about your life. This is as you seek to obey His will, walk in His ways, and seek Him in all of life, and then God, the Spirit, will enable you to perform His will, and show you the truth you have learned in real, practical ways. You will come to see Him even more. When God illuminates you, the truth is as real as it is true—for it is fleshed out before your very eyes. You experience God performing His Word and His promises as you obey Him - you see His character in everyday life.

Where do we seek God?

We seek Him where He is to be found.

1) His Word — Whether it is preached, or read privately, the Word of God is where God reveals His mind, His will, His ways, His purposes, His works. Only when we meditate on the Word can we come to see God for who He is and admire Him.

2) Prayer — we are not only to meditate, but we are to respond to the meditation in prayer. We are to be communing with Him in particular times of devotion. We are also to be focused on our work, on our tasks, and turn them into prayer from time to time, as we are able.

3) His people — Christ is revealed in and through the lives and experiences of God's people. We are to root ourselves in the local church, where we can commune with God among God's people through corporate worship, fellowship and discipleship. Communion with God is not an entirely solitary experience.

If those are the places, or the means by which we seek God, we need to ask, how are we to seek God? Scripture tells us at least four ways that we are to seek God in communion over His Word, in prayer and among His people.

**Matthew 6:33** <sup>33</sup> *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

We must seek God as our priority, trusting God for the things the unsaved seek as their priorities. God is the priority pursuit of our life.

**Proverbs 2:1-5** <sup>KJ</sup> **Proverbs 2:1** *My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you,* <sup>2</sup> *So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;* <sup>3</sup> *Yes, if you cry out for*

discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, <sup>4</sup> If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; <sup>5</sup> Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.

We must seek God intentionally, expecting to find Him. We must search for God like a treasure-seeker diligently seeks out real riches.

**Luke 11:5-13** <sup>5</sup> And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup> 'for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup> "and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? <sup>8</sup> "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. <sup>9</sup> " So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup> "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup> "Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

We must seek God persistently, not giving up. We cannot seek God intermittently or give up impatiently.

**Jeremiah 29:13** <sup>13</sup> And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

We must seek God wholeheartedly, turning our entire being to the task. In several places the Bible tells us to seek God with all our hearts, or wholeheartedly. What is wholehearted seeking?

1) It is seeking with earnest, hard-working effort. You engage your entire being in the pursuit of God.

**1 Timothy 4:15** <sup>15</sup> Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

We must work hard at our pursuit of God. Inevitably, someone will object: But isn't working the opposite of grace?

Often Christians are confused on this point, thinking that hard work in the spiritual realm is like working for your salvation. Paul is a model of understanding the balance between our effort and God's grace. Listen to his own testimony of how he worked.

**Colossians 1:29** <sup>29</sup> To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

**1 Corinthians 15:10** <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

"Work" is wrong when it is used to earn merit with God, and supposedly place us in good standing with Him. This is true legalism. It is when we place our faith and trust in our own works. Works cannot make us right with God or keep us right with God. The biblical balance is that we work out what God works in us.

**Philippians 2:12-13** <sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only,

*but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

God places desires in us, but we must act on those desires wholeheartedly. The result will be that we will 'fan into flame' more desire for God, and God will work through us. Paul told Timothy:

**2 Timothy 1:6** <sup>6</sup> *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

Work must be active. Work must be intense. Laziness is a sin. Being passive or working with less intensity does not mean you are more grace-based. We are to work with all our heart, but we are to do so dependently. Paul certainly modelled this kind of effort:

**2 Corinthians 11:27** <sup>27</sup> *in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*

- 2) Wholehearted seeking is narrowing your focus so that your heart is not divided, distracted and sent in varying directions. Remember how Mary focused her attention entirely on Jesus?

**Luke 10:38-42** <sup>38</sup> *Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." <sup>41</sup> And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. <sup>42</sup> But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."*

Wholehearted seeking is not simply wholehearted in effort, it is wholehearted in focus. Seeking God wholeheartedly means seeking to unite your heart and your thoughts around God, and relating all things to Him.

- 3) It is forsaking the idols of our heart:

**Matthew 10:37-39** <sup>37</sup> *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

**Luke 9:57-62** <sup>57</sup> *Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." <sup>59</sup> Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup> Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." <sup>61</sup> And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." <sup>62</sup> But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

**Luke 14:26-33** *and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup> "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup> "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it -- <sup>29</sup> "lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> "saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> "Or what king, going to make war against*

*another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> "Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. <sup>33</sup> "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*

Wholehearted seeking is not only wholehearted in effort, and in focus, but also in target.

Jesus taught a radical kind of discipleship which has no place for sharing the pursuit of our hearts with anyone else. Only God is to be sought as an ultimate end; all others are means. We love others because we love God, and for God's sake. When we seek family, or homes, or goods as ends in themselves, alongside God, they are idols, and God tells us to forsake idols. We considered this when we looked at what ultimate love for God means. When we seek God so as to commune with Him, we are to have this attitude as well. God alone is the ultimate source of joy, dependence and devotion to us, and we seek Him in that way.

If we seek God with diligent effort, with a single minded focus, with wholehearted effort where He may be found, we will enjoy the reward of coming to see God through the illumination of the Spirit. This will mean a deepening communion with God, a greater knowledge of God, and so a deeper love for God.

We have spoken today about seeking God in His Word in prayer and among His people. That leads us to the fifth and final section of this series – the practices of the Christian life. We will spend some time considering the practical activities that need to be part of a Christian's life – the Word, prayer, and the church.