

Whose Job Is It to Please Who?

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. – Ephesians 5:8-10

In one word, the Apostle Paul summarized the condition of every person whose sin is not covered by the grace of Christ. That word is “darkness.” Not only was darkness a realm in which we lived, we were darkness. We could not see right. We could not think right. It is fanciful at best to imagine that we could ever do right. But, in Christ: “. . . he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:12, 13). Now, in like manner, light is no longer merely a realm in which we are free to move, it is a nature that we can embrace. This is possible because we are in union with Christ, Who is Himself, the “light of the world” (John 8:12).

Once we were darkness, now we are light in the Lord. The instruction of verse 10 seems rather obvious. Since we have graciously been given a new nature even as we struggle with an old one, it seems that we would want the Lord to set the course for our lives. Our lives are to adopt the practice of “finding out” what God wants. The verb Paul uses described the testing of metal. In this sense, it means to discover through careful examination what options of life are the God-pleasing ones. God’s will is not measured, at least in the short run, by the mere opening and closing of doors. All things pertaining to the will of God must first be measured by the truth of Scripture and the character of Jesus into which we have been called. While that process may not pinpoint every choice in life, it will certainly eliminate a lot of them.

But, do measuring life’s choices by the light of Christ really describe this “personal relationship” with God we hear so much about these days in the church at large? In many settings, God is depicted as the One Who exists primarily to bless us, to help us to succeed, to always be approachable and friendly and to never condemn our behavior, much less, discipline us for it. We are as free to revolve our lives around our own dreams and aspirations as we were before we ever came to Christ. We listen to bulleted lists of pointers that tell us how to achieve our dreams, have bliss in our marriages, enjoy success in our professional lives, *etc.*, and we think of it as masterful preaching in the spirit of Elijah and John the Baptist. The quality of corporate worship is judged according to what we like and dislike rather than what we render to God.

Without any preconceived notions of what it must look like, would you like to infuse a real sense of significance into your walk with Christ in 2006? Jesus shared one pointer from a Galilean hillside, but it still holds up even after two millennia: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness . . .” (Matthew 6:33). And, I believe Paul was saying essentially the same thing when he counseled his readers: “. . . and find out what pleases the Lord.”