

# Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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## Being a Servant of God: I have finished the Work You gave me to do

There are a number of reasons given in the Bible which help us understand why the Lord Jesus came to earth. For example, in John 17:1-4 we read: *“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”*

We immediately see that the overriding purpose of Christ was to glorify the Father, the only true God. We also determine He was the Son of the Father and, therefore, the Son of God. It was through Him that eternal life was to be given to many. This eternal life is described as knowing the Father, the only true God and Jesus Christ Himself (see John 17:3). So the work of the Lord Jesus was to reveal the Father to mankind and to reveal Himself as the predicted Christ. The word “many” in John 17:1-4 quoted refers to the love-gift of the Father to His Son and includes all those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. In New Testament times, we see the “many” in the true church which is the bride for which Christ died.

He then claims to *“have glorified the Father on the earth”* (John 17:4). The excellence of the Father was presented by Christ in a number of ways.

1. The Father was seen in His Person;
2. His will matched the will of His Father;
3. He spoke the Father’s words; and
4. He did the works of His Father.

In the statement, *“I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”*, the work to which He refers covers all the previously mentioned items.

In this message, we are examining the work of a Christian for God. We will focus on the areas covered by Christ in His prayer:

1. Revealing the Father and the Son;
2. Knowing and implementing the will of the Father;
3. Glorifying God in our conduct;
4. Preaching and teaching the word of God; and
5. Labouring for God while here.

### 1. Revealing the Father and the Son

The Lord Jesus came to reveal the Father. Firstly, He revealed the Father in His Person as the Son. We often use the phrase “father like son”. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Christ is the express image of God. He was the perfect reflection of the Father as a man here on earth and remains so in heaven. Furthermore, He declared the Father in word (John 1:18). He also said in John 14:10: *“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me...”*

Also, at the end of John 14:10, He stated: *“... the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”* Hence, He manifested the Father in every attitude and by every action (1 Timothy 3:16 and John 17:6). We read His words to Philip in John 14:9: *“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...?”*

In revealing the Father, He also revealed Himself as the Son of God - the expected Christ. In this way, He fulfilled the prophetic scriptures concerning Himself and proved Himself as the only Person who was able to keep the law of God given through Moses. In Matthew 5:17 we read His words: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

Christians are sons of the Father by adoption (Galatians 4:6). As such they have both dignity of position and the responsibility to do His will. The Lord Jesus Christ is **the** only-begotten Son of God! As we have noted, He has revealed the Father to us in His Person, His words and His works. As sons **we** are expected to do the will of our God and Father. In order to know that will, we have to be in constant communion with Him. Therefore, our prayer lives must be full and our studies of the scriptures must be both deep and regular.

As to the first, Peter instructs us to watch in prayer (1 Peter 4:7). In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus is the perfect example of this as He agonised in prayer (Luke 22:44). Hence, our prayers should be fervent and with sincerity (James 5:16).

As to the second, we are to be diligent to rightly interpret the scriptures as *“workmen who are approved of God”* (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul commended Timothy for his knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:15: *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”* It is scripture that prepares a soul for salvation. The Apostle Paul used the scriptures to reason that Christ had to suffer and rise from among the dead (Acts 17:2-3). We, as Christians, ought to be like the Bereans of whom it is written in Acts 17:11: *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”*

## 2. Knowing and implementing the will of the Father

The fact that the Lord Jesus spoke the words that came from His Father is another reason for gaining a good knowledge of the word of God. If we are to reveal the Father and the Son we need to know the teaching that comes from them and pass it on.

We can also find out through prayer and the scriptures, the spiritual gifts God has given us and the work that He would have us do. How important it is for us as disciples and servants to hear the word of God; determine His will; trust Him; and obey.

The hymn writer, Elsie Yale (1873-1956), wrote:

*There's a work for Jesus, ready at your hand,  
'Tis a task the Master just for you has planned.  
Haste to do His bidding, yield Him service true;  
There's a work for Jesus none but you can do.*

At first glance, we may agree with the general sentiments of these words; but we are always in danger of **not** doing the work that God has set before us. In such a case, the Lord **will** get another believer to do the job. Therefore, we must maintain our communion with Him by prayer and study - but it also requires the confession of our sins knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive those sins (1 John 1:9).

In writing to Timothy, the Apostle Paul has to urge him to do the work to which he had been appointed. He even has to command him to *“stir up the gift of God within him”* (2 Timothy 1:9-16, also see 1 Timothy 4:14). All Christians have spiritual gifts. Have you identified yours? Do you use them in accordance with scripture? As well as spiritual gifts, Christians have skills which may also be effectively used for God.

In Ephesians 4:11 we read of people gifts the Lord gave to the church. They included: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. In the primary sense, apostles and prophets formed the foundation of inspired teaching from God and they have passed off the scene. There are still teachers today. These are able to clearly explain the meaning of scripture. Also, there are pastors or shepherds who take a particular care of the flock. Furthermore, there are evangelists who go forth proclaiming the Gospel of God in order to bring souls to repentance and to faith in Christ. These also encourage new believers to attend a Bible-believing church in their locality. The over-riding purpose of all these people is found in Ephesians 4:12 *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”*. In this verse, the word “saints” is simply used to refer to Christians in general.

Other gifts are found listed in Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:7-16 and 1 Corinthians 12-14. Some of these are sign gifts which were exercised by the early church in order to confirm that the word proclaimed by them was of God (Mark 16:20; Acts 8:13 and Acts 14:3). This is verified by Hebrews 2:4: *“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”*

There is, however, a matter of vital importance in the use of any gift, namely, **love**. If your gift is used to satisfy your own ego then it is worthless (1 Corinthians 13). It has to be exercised in love, first for God and, second, for fellow

believers in order that the church be encouraged and strengthened. For example, the sign gift of speaking in a language not previously learned was prominent in the church at Corinth; but the Apostle Paul tells us it was a sign that was for those who believed not (1 Corinthians 14:22) and it was a gift that would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8).

On the other hand, the gift of prophecy was of great benefit. 1 Corinthians 14:3 states: *"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."* This applies today to people who give teaching of a prophetic character. The only time that tongues benefits the church is if there is an interpreter present (1 Corinthians 14:5). It then becomes teaching. Once your gift or gifts has been identified, then your work within the church situation will be made clearer. The same applies to natural skills and abilities that God may have given you.

Another reason the Lord Jesus came to earth was *"to put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself"* (Hebrews 9:26). The Apostle John assures us that we can know *"that he was manifested to take away our sins"* (1 John 3:5). It was at the cross that the soul of the sinless Saviour was *"made an offering for our sin"* (Isaiah 53:10). There *"God made Him to be sin for us so that we could be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

No other person could do this because **all** are sinners (Romans 3:23). Jesus alone can save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him. There is no other sacrifice for sin that God accepts. Hence, it is the Christian's role to present Christ as the only Saviour of sinners to souls on earth. To that end, Christians are all witnesses of Christ. They may proclaim the Gospel publicly or promote the Gospel privately.

### **3. Glorifying God in our conduct**

When Christians are living a godly life and also naming the name of Christ, then the witness is full. If they do this, they may be sure they will suffer some form of persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). The conduct of the Lord Jesus glorified God, so should ours as Christians. It is written in Ephesians 5:1-2: *"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."* Our conduct is to reflect the sacrificial love of Christ. The characteristics of this love are found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. Ephesians 5:3 states: *"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints..."* All manner of sin is to be avoided by Christians should they wish to be useful to God.

### **4. Preaching and teaching the word of God**

We then come to think of preaching and teaching. In Matthew 4:23 we read that Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. This was a major part of the work the Father had given Him to do. In this verse it was a public ministry. At other times, He taught more privately. His dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3:1-16 included both teaching and preaching. Now, we have already seen that teachers are people gifts given to the church. Therefore, not every Christian is a teacher. All do not have the God-given ability to explain the meaning of Scripture with due clarity and simplicity.

Again, while all believers are to be witnesses of the Lord Jesus, not all are able to proclaim the gospel publicly. In Romans 10:14-15 Paul wrote: *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"* If you are a preacher of this ilk, then God will have put it into your heart to go forth in His name. He will also have prepared you for the task.

### **5. Labouring for God while here**

There are different ways in which the Lord may call you to specific service. For example, there was a young man who earnestly prayed for weeks that the Lord would send out preachers into the open air to speak to the public where they were found. The Lord then presented Him with a booklet entitled: *"Go Ye Also!"* He knew what he had to do.

Paul was led to service in a different way. He was brought low by the Lord on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9:1-9). The Lord Jesus revealed Himself to this man who asked: *"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"* (Acts 9:6). Paul left it to the Lord as to the work he was to do.

This leads us to consider our personal work for the Lord. We could look at other purposes for which Christ came into the world and discuss those; but time constrains us to concentrate on the work the Lord might have us to do. There is work as missionaries whether on the doctrinal, medical, pastoral or practical side. There is work linked with the local assembly in regard to children, youth, adults and the aged. There is preaching and teaching within the local church and outside of it. There is work directed to communities which may well lead to a Christian witness in hospitals, schools, old people's homes, orphanages, prisons and so many others.

Now, presented with a list like this, don't ask yourself, "What can I do for the Lord?" Like the Apostle Paul, ask the Lord, "*What would **You** have me to do?*" Then look and listen for His answer. It may come from your daily reading, a pamphlet, a bible reading or a speaker at church. It may come from a family member or some other source. Once directed by Him prayerfully proceed in small steps. Ask the Lord to show His will by opening or shutting doors. If He shuts the door, then be assured He will have a better plan for you. If He opens the door then go forward in His grace.

Once the aspect of work has been settled, then labour wholeheartedly before the Lord (Colossians 3.23) knowing that He will work with you (Mark 16:20). The principle of Ecclesiastes 9:10 applies here: "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...*" However, remember to continue to pray earnestly about the work.

It must be remembered that, in His sovereign will, the Lord may bring a work to an end. Unless, you remain close to Him, then this may be difficult to accept at first. It is important to remember Proverbs 3:5-6 which states: "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*" So often the Lord closes a work only to present you with another. Always hold on to the Boy Scouts' motto: "Be prepared!"

We close by saying that, at a time yet future, all true Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:9-11). It is there that their works of service will be examined by Him. Works that He judges unacceptable will be burned away; but those which He judges acceptable will be rewarded. Even so, the greatest reward for a Christian worker would be to hear Him say: "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant*" (see Matthew 25:21).

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