



Berean Christian Fellowship

DEVOTIONAL 159.0

August 25
2017

The Father's Purpose—P4

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

We know that if we ask our Heavenly Father *“anything according to His will He hears us”* (1 Jn. 5:14), *“for everyone who asks receives... What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent... If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”* (Lk. 11:10-13)

Parents give their children what they ask for if it is in their purpose for the child (which is the child's good)—water when they're thirsty, food when they're hungry, etc. Good parents don't give their children things that are not according to their purpose: dessert for every meal or the stepladder to the medicine cabinet. Parents also educate their children, discipline them, and institute boundaries: “no running in the street, no swearing, or bedtime now!”

In the same way, God promises to give us anything we ask so long as it is in His will for us, and He withholds those things that are not in His will for us. Sometimes we go through challenges and difficulties in life where it seems like He is withholding good things from us, as when a child is “hurt” when they don't get what they want, or is disciplined when they had been getting away with it. But this is for their good! Discipline encompasses education and correction to turn children into disciplined adults (having the ability to control and motivate themselves to stay on track and do what is right): *“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”* (Heb. 12:11).

When God's purpose doesn't line up with what we think is best for us, we often look for ways around that purpose, like children looking for loop-holes in their parent's word, interpreting it to their liking, and stressing the letter instead of the spirit: “Mom said no lemon bars before dinner, but she didn't say anything about these Oreos!” “Dad said not to go into the neighbor's yard, but I think he'd want us to get our baseball back.” In the same way, we often claim to be obedient while interpreting our Father's purpose by OUR spirit—more to our liking, couched in “good” intentions, *“so for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God”* (Matt. 15:5-6).

But children are to obey the spirit behind their parent's word, *“For those who live according to the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit”* (Rom. 8:5b). The faithful child says, *“I seek not My own will but the will of Him who sent Me”* (Jn. 5:30). He trusts completely in his parent's will: *“the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise”* (Jn. 5:19b). If we know our Father's will is best for us, we should seek His will first: *“do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’...your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you**”* (Matt. 12:31-33), as Jesus did: *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; **nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will**”* (Matt. 26:39).

Beyond “compliance” with their will, every parent hopes their child seeks it diligently because they know they are loved, AND because they love their parents. May we all say with Jesus, *“I do as the Father has commanded Me, **so that the world may know that I love the Father**”* (Jn. 14:31a). Even so, Amen.

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