

The Divine Exchange of the Christian Life
Chapter 1: PREOCCUPATION with CHRIST
(Smith & George Interview, edited by Bob Clarkson)

Christ IS my life!

Let's consider some of the enlightening revelations from God in regards to understanding that Christ Himself is **in** you, and He **is** your life. All forms of weariness, exhaustion or burn-out come from self-effort. The Holy Spirit never gets tired. He is the strength which we do not possess. And when we relax in the state we are in, "Christ **is** our life," we never get tired. If we do get tired, it is time to step back and let the Spirit of Christ do what He came to do. He came to live His life through us. He does not want us to try to live the Christian life, ever! As I travel around, I see people with sincere hearts that want to serve God with all their life. And they're being told that the way you do it is to have your quiet time. It gives me a phenomenal way to judge myself and others.

We have made religion idols out of such things as quiet times and prayer times and Bible study times and so forth. There is nothing wrong with these activities unless we have made them 'religious' requirements. I have found that spiritual burnout has reached epidemic proportions, not only among your regular church members, but also among your full-time missionaries and clergy. They're dropping out all over the place. You go to any pastor's conference this year, and you'll find that a significant percentage of guys that were there last year are no longer there. And even those that are staying are beginning to acknowledge the drop outs they know. They are even beginning to acknowledge that they were the ones who were teaching the message that produced exhaustion in their members and finally caught up with them.

There's a story in the Old Testament that tells about when Elisha was speaking to the sons of the prophets, and one of them went out to pick some vegetation to be boiled in the food pot. As they were eating it, someone shouts out, "There's death in the pot." I believe that is a good analogy as to the reason for so much spiritual exhaustion around the country. There is poison in the pot. It's what Christians are being fed. The soup is bad. And of course, the fellows that are producing the soup, the chefs in the kitchen, are eating it themselves. And they're doing it so sincerely. But they fail to take into account this truth. "You cannot be wrong, sincerely enough, to be right!"

We Christians are quick to point out to those of other faiths that sincerity does not make anything right and sincerity cannot save one's soul. Yet, we fail to search the scriptures to prove that what we are hearing from pulpits and lecterns is actually true. I myself was sincerely wrong about God's Word on hundreds of beliefs. Some were only slightly wrong. Others were blatantly false. Unfortunately, I had failed to notice that most of my truth was relative because I got it from my relatives and those in their circle of influence. It was only when I turned in desperation to God to know His Truth and not what was making me most miserable, that the Holy Spirit began to guide me into all truth.

But it was hard to let go of my long term beliefs. That had become my anchor. But they had me anchored in a toxic sea! It was my own spiritual exhaustion that caused me to cry out to God for correction and relief. I had certainly not found the 'rest' Jesus promised. But when I told God that HE could do anything to me in order to help me know His truth and the truth about myself, He dragged me through some very hard times, which were necessary for my learning. It was so worthwhile, I would

have endured things much worse to get what I have now. I have that 'rest' of Jesus! And I am more fruitful than ever before in my life.

Christ **is** the life. There is nothing to do or to achieve beyond that. This is He. This is it. Once I've come to believe that, I cannot burn out. It is impossible now for me to be exhausted. In fact, it is the very opposite. "Come to me and have a vacation." So when I see a person spiritually exhausted, spiritually burned out when their Christian life has become a drudgery, I want to gently, but definitively proclaimed to them, "You haven't been fully evangelized." I don't care if you are the leader of your denomination. You haven't really known the gospel, if you're tired in serving God. What sums it all up is Isaiah 40:31, "Even your best young men, your Olympic runners, will stumble and fall. But "those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

I am a unity with Christ. My waiting on the Lord is not setting aside a day just to look pious or to go without food and gaze heavenward. That's not waiting on the Lord. That can just produce a grumbling stomach by five o'clock in the afternoon. Waiting on the Lord is an open spirit to receive new truth from God. And I can only receive that revelation that 'Christ **is** my life,' if I am willing to let God reveal new things to me. This **is not to disrespect** those well-meaning people who passed on their beliefs, some of which were very wrong. It **is to respect** God's truth over any others. "You shall have no other gods before me!" Not even the gods of your own beliefs which contradict my Word, are acceptable. Sincerity never makes a false thing to be true. Brothers and Sisters, believe this if nothing else, "You are one with Christ. Christ **is** your life." Galatians 2:20 **is** true!

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I maintain that to know what eternal life is, is to know that it isn't heaven in the sky, but it is actually my life now, a new dimension of life and new quality of life, Christ **is** my life. To know that and to know the rest that brings is heaven on earth. I'm no longer struggling to be a Christian. I now realize in every situation of life that I am fused together with Christ, I can't burn out. So when I meet a person who is burned out, I know that, as I say, without being judgmental, but as fulfilling my responsibility as a brother in Christ, I say, "You're not fully evangelized. I believe you may be born again. But you do not fully understand the Gospel. You haven't seen what Jesus really came to do in you. You have a hyped up Judaism with a living Savior. But, you've just extended the law and included Jesus to help you keep it.

It's like in marriage, you can be married, but you will never come alive to marriage until you have died to singleness. And it's the same thing in the Christian life. Christ can live in you. He's alive to you. But you'll never come alive to Christ until you die to the law (the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden). The law is totally about self effort. Until you die to the law and come alive to God, the grace of God that is ours through Christ Jesus is not realized in you. You may be married to Jesus, but it's a miserable marriage. And, like some who have been miserable for years, you might even want a divorce to take place.

Dynamics of GRACE

Now let's talk about **grace** and why we do not fully walk in it. Romans five says, the law was given so that sin might abound. You can't out sin, grace. Now it might seem like a lot of us try. I was with a pastor in Africa. He was only repeating what the missionaries had taught him. And he came to me and said, "There's so much sin in my church. What do we do?" So I said, "What are you

teaching?” He said, “I tell them to live the 10 commandments and live the sermon on the mountain and try to live the epistles.”

And I said, “No wonder you have so much sin in your church. You are sowing the seeds of sin power. The power of sin is in the law. I also see all across America churches are obsessed with sin. Part of that is that we are sowing the Law in our preaching. We are preaching that our people should try to be like Jesus. Instead we should be reaching that Jesus **is** my life and that we should let Him live His life in us. We should help our people see that unless we stop focusing our behaviors and dote on Jesus, His life will **not** be seen in us and through us.

A pastor in California recently made the statement that a program like ours only has an audience because of all the sick teaching that has been taking place for years. This sick teaching is what makes our congregations sickly, miserable and ashamed that they cannot measure up to the Law. And that is true. I do not question that pastor’s sincerity in his teaching. I used to teach it too. I taught this sick stuff before I knew better. I was very sincere. I wasn’t trying to mess people up. I wasn’t trying to get all of my Christian brothers and sisters to believe something just because I taught it. I was simply teaching what had been passed on to me by people I respected and teaching it to the best of my ability.

So I’m not criticizing any pastor’s or teacher’s motives. I’m just saying it is time to analyze what we believe and pass on to others. Whether we are pastors, teachers or just people, we need to search the Word of God to confirm what we have heard aligns with the Gospel of grace by faith a gift of God devoid of works. Paul applauded the Bereans who searched the scriptures to confirm that what Paul was teaching was indeed true. And

believe you me, Paul's teaching was radically contrary to the Law.

Grace is the antithesis of the Law. Both are necessary. But we can only live by one of them. Under Grace, we are taught by Jesus and His followers, we must let the Christ who lives **in** us, live **through** us. That is what it means to be 'dead to the Law.' It is not that the Law is dead or even passé. The Law shows us that we cannot live it out. That is why the Cross and Resurrection were essential to Salvation itself. Jesus did not call you and me to live the Christian life. We can't. He called Himself to live it. He wants to be doing in our bodies today, what He did in His own body 2000 years ago. Just get out of the way so that He can get into action.

We are scared to death to let people go free in Christ. We can't manipulate a person who let's Jesus live through Him. When a believer is 'walking in the Spirit,' that is letting Christ live His life, no one, pastor or otherwise, can manipulate the Spirit of Jesus. It would be foolishness to even try. What a message! That's what good news is. I don't have to live anything at all. This is the meaning of the word gospel. When Tyndale printed the Bible in 1600 in ancient English, his definition for the word gospel was: 'good glad, merry news that will make a man leap for joy.' That is what the Gospel is all about. It's a good news that Christ is alive and has accomplished for us, what we could never accomplish for ourselves. I don't have to try and please God anymore! Christ **is** the pleasure of God **in** me. But how many times do we hear? "I'm doing this to please God." "I'm going to please God."

If you are in Christ, and this union with Christ is what pleases God, how much more pleasing do you think you can get? We are fully accepted in him. We are the beloved. Yet, there's something in our natural spirit that doesn't want to be accepted by Him. We have this

undercurrent flowing, like a river of doubt. We don't believe we deserve grace, so we want to hear preaching that tells us to try to become deserving. We actually choose this kind of preaching and teaching. But, grace, by definition is 'undeserved' favor. It is ridiculous to try to deserve something that cannot be obtained by deserving. And even knowing that we can't, we want to hear that we can deserve our own acceptance. All of this twisted thinking very negatively affects our prayers.

Dynamics of Prayer

Let's talk about **prayer**. We might even stir up some controversy about it. When it comes to prayer in conjunction with the idea that 'Christ **is** my life,' many people have a problem. Because it cuts right into the whole legalistic formality of prayer times and prayer meetings, it puts people off. If 'Christ **is** my life,' then I can no longer say that, "I have said my prayer for the day." I can no longer get away with a quiet time with God in the morning being a lucky charm to make my day a 'good Christian' day. And that is a problem for many Christians. But is it really necessary to go to our prayer closet and pray? And is it valid to call our place of quiet time with God our 'war' room? [Satan may be warring against us, but we are loving against his hatred.]

What we are saying is that Christ **is** living in me 24 hours a day. I sleep **in** Christ, I rise **in** Christ. I am **in** Christ. That is who I am. It is my identity, my self-image. I am Bob **in** Christ. And Christ **is in** me. Christ **is** me! That is who I am as a Christian. In Philippians 4:13, it says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The word 'strengthen' used there in the Greek means to infuse. I am fused with Christ. I am no longer only me. **I am us!**

Infusion can be seen in hot water becoming hot tea. If you lay the teabag up against the outside of the cup,

nothing happens. But if you take the teabag and drop it into the water, the strength of the tea comes into the water and infuses the water with tea. In actual fact, the water has become tea. We don't just call it tea. It has become tea. And that is the essence of salvation. So since 'Christ **is** my life,' there is no one particular time in the day when it is more important to pray than any other time. We are in absolute unity. And in the light of that, I can understand what Paul meant when he said, pray without ceasing. To me prayer has become constant dialog with God.

"...prayer without ceasing." That means, I am without ceasing doing whatever this thing prayer is. This means that prayer cannot be something that we have traditionally thought of doing in a certain place at a certain time for so many minutes, either in my closet or church or any other prescribed place or time. And I think this is where people get threatened. I think they're open to hear something, but they feel insecure or even threatened that believing this teaching will take their ritual of prayer away from them. And it will take the 'value' out of prayer. But when prayer becomes like pillow talk with your most significant other, it comes to life like you have never imagined possible. The Holy Spirit is constantly whispering guidance to us all day long. He speaks softly. So you do need to make lots of quiet time in which you can hear His voice over the din.

There may well be special times and special places for prayer from time to time. I might even take off a whole day, or a week even, to wait upon God. But when I realize who I am in Christ and He in me, the 'ritual' expression of it is gone and supplanted by the authentic expression of genuine affection. Prayer changes from intense to intimate expression. Prayer becomes spontaneous. And the more passionately in love I become with God, the more often prayer erupts spontaneously within me. Better still, when I

realize that since 'Christ **is** my life,' and He is incessantly conversing with the Father, all I need to do is tune in to their conversations and agree with what They are saying! From that point on it is no longer I who prays. It is the Spirit of Christ within me who prays. And believe you me, Jesus' prayers are far more powerful, profound, poignant and passionate than mine could ever be. Sometimes I am surprised at what He prays using my lips. And I know when He is praying because the words were not formed in my mind before utterance.

When a Christian realizes that 'Christ **is** his life,' his prayer life will be changed dramatically. People that I come into contact with, who understand their identification in Christ without ever having interacted with one another, experience the same thing. Our prayer life has changed. When the Exchanged Life message is taught, it is important to address how prayer will also change. The Exchanged Life understanding changes your prayers to be more like unspoken communication between lovers. Prayer becomes natural, spontaneous and almost autonomic. Prayer has become an integral part of me because Christ **is** in me, praying for and with me always. Prayer is no longer a performance or something to be done. It's something to be lived. It's a life to be thoroughly enjoyed.

There are many phrases or words that we may have been taught to include in our prayers. There are various postures we take. There are places that seem to be more or less conducive to prayer. There are times that may be set aside for prayer. And, of course, there are certain things we are encouraged to put on our prayer lists. Prayer can be silent or audible. Prayer can be public or private. Prayer can be religious or spontaneous. The most dramatic shift in prayer life is that most of these things drop out of our practice and even our awareness.

For example, some people use the phrase at the end of each prayer, ‘... in the name of Jesus.’ Some begin every prayer with ‘our Heavenly Father.’ Some people pray for the removal of pain, discomfort, financial distress or medical malady as primary requests. Some pray for pleasure, success or tranquility in relationships or other pleasant things. These too are the most frequently occurring prayer list items. And these things are also the same ones included in the prayers of those of every religion on earth. Unfortunately, Christians seem to think that these are the will of God for us. Why then did Paul write, “... in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus”?

God is in the process of conforming us to the image of His Son, Jesus. And to that end, we must suffer the same things that Jesus suffered. And, to be sure as well, suffering is an essential ingredient in the recipe for transformation of any human soul. So, with that having been said, we are often guilty of praying against the will of God because of this general notion, and a wrong one I might add, that ‘good’ things come from God and ‘bad’ things come from the devil. Furthermore, Satan has no desire that anyone would become more like his arch enemy, Jesus Christ. Consequently, Satan might be inclined to give us ‘good’ things, which we might mistakenly thank God for, in order to distract us from the purposes of God. However, when ‘good’ is defined as anything that serves the purposes of God and ‘bad’ as anything that serves the purposes of man, we might realize that “... in everything give thanks,” is the most appropriate response to both pleasure and adversity.

And when we understand that “Christ **is** my life,” all things do work together for ‘good’ (God’s ‘good’) to those who love God and are called to cooperate with His

purposes.” In the Exchanged Life prayer becomes a constant conversation and awareness of God’s presence and purpose that extend far beyond our own personal experience of life. So don’t be surprised if your prayers change radically along with your radical departure from ‘trying to do right by God’ to ‘trusting God to do right by Himself’ in and through us.

The sum and substance of salvation is to affect a Bethlehem (birth of Christ) within our human soul, giving Him a body in this moment in time that He can use to express Himself. We are most blessed when we abandon ourselves entirely to His use. This reminds me of a prayer I used to hear my grandfather say at the dinner table. “Bless this food to our use and us to thy service.” Yep. God wants to do both whether we pray it or not.

Now to my way of thinking, some of the ‘canned’ phrases, words or ideas which we repeat frequently in prayer, are dead giveaways of piousness and self-promotion. Most of them are hollow and add nothing to the value or purpose of the prayer. Consider your own prayers. Contemplate any ‘pet’ phrases which might fall into the ‘right-sounding’ aspect of your prayers versus a true statement of your heart toward God. Consider which of them might be, at least subconsciously, ‘obligating’ God to answer the prayer in the way you want it to be answered. (He says, “If you ask anything in my name...” We say (“in the name of Jesus, I pray.”)

Consider that some of the things for which you pray are actually contrary to God’s Word. For example, it is not Biblical to pray that God will ‘save’ a particular person. He can do anything He wants with their circumstances, but He cannot force anyone to be ‘saved.’ That would be equivalent to forcing someone to be intimately physical with you who has no desire to be. The

more you let Christ do the living for you, the more your prayers will become as natural and frequent as eating or sleeping or daydreaming or talking to anyone you love! And, you will see more and more revelations of truth in the Bible that you never saw before.

Knowing God's Will

What happens when I see a specific need? I think that my idea of the prayer list is to present it so that God can handle the needs and problems. Rather, I see that he has placed me in the situation I'm in. That is my first approach to each situation. Wherever I find myself, the pressures of that situation are His ordained triggers to get things moving. He's put me there. So once you understand the Christ life, there's no more complaint about what's going on. The pressure, even the hurt, is great. That's God impressing on my mind that He's about to do something here or He wants me to learn something.

Jesus has His man, **me**, in the middle of this, and He's going to do it **as** me, **through** me. So I will feel the pressure. I am going to feel, even my weakness, my helplessness in this situation, I will feel the hurt. Whatever the negative pressure is, to me that's a positive. It tells me something is going to happen here. So, what is it? I want to know what God has in mind. That's where most believers get thoroughly confounded. We have this great issue about seeking the will of God.

I used to tell my evangelical friends, "You spend all your time seeking the will of God. That's why you never do it. You're forever searching for this mysterious thing called the will of God." The scripture says very clearly, "You have the mind of Christ." And it only makes sense. If Christ lives in me, then His mind and His desires in this situation are mine. And I take that leap of faith that He is

actually desiring **in** me. And does Christ ever not know the will of God. For Pete's sake, Christ **living in us is** the will of God. So stop searching for the will of God and let Christ live it out in you! Just **don't** do it! Watch Him do it!

So when I see a situation and I feel the need of that situation, that's Christ **in** me, He is looking through my eyes and I see what He sees. I feel what He feels. I desire what he desires. As my most significant other, I know His heart, soul and mind. I don't need to ask. He doesn't need to ask. We both know what we mutually desire and simply respond without question. God in Christ will be glorified in this situation according to God's purposes. Rather than hesitate, I move immediately to express His heart, soul and mind. For every negative situation, and positive one as well, I believe that Christ in me speaks the will of God. That is how I understand prayer and the will of God.

I think that prayer has become for many a confusing or maybe even futile exercise or expression. We have tried to make prayer a dutiful performance instead of a natural expression in response to life. God designed human relationship with significant others to show us how He wants us to relate to Him. The more intimate you become with another person, the fewer questions you have about their desires. And the more intimate you are, the greater your desire is to please the other. We express the will of our mate. And in a marital union with Christ, we express His will all the time.

Likewise, we sometimes, in a fit of selfishness, actually hurt those we love. So it is with Christ. The objective is to love the other more and more which will accrue to doing their will more and more which pleases them more and more. When I began to realize that everything I express is part of prayer without ceasing,

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everything took on greater and deeper meaning. Like I talked about a moment ago, even what appears at first glance as a negative situation, has very positive purposes behind it. That drained all of my personal anguish and anxiety out of every experience. Prayer becomes the most natural thing in the world. "Delight yourself of the Lord. He gives you the desire of your heart." If I'm delighting in the Lord, the desires of my heart are an extension of the desires of His heart.

If Christ is truly living and **reigning** in me, every expression of my body is the will of God. My problem for many years as a Christian was that I kept reneging on my surrender of my sovereignty to the sovereignty to Christ. But as long as I trust Christ to rule over me, and don't try to take control, both of us will be pleased with the outcome. It will be our pleasure to do what God desires (wills). So I stopped badgering God to tell me His will, and began to live as though I am the will of God through the embodiment of Christ in the Spirit inside me. I couldn't get any more in the will of God than when I'm in Christ and Christ is in me right now, the issue is **not** a question, "Lord Jesus, what do you want to do through me today?" The issue **is** to let Him express Himself on our mutual behalf in every situation. As the late Billy Graham wrote, "Let Go! And Let God!" Now we've had a rousing discussion about how even our prayers are transformed, now let's talk a bit about 'quiet time.'

Quiet Time, (Covert or Overt)

Quiet time is taught as necessary to live the Christian life. It is a place where we can be with God and not be disturbed by others. During this quiet time, we may sing songs, read the Bible and pray among other things. And the objective is to know God better and show Him our respect and affection. And there is nothing wrong with

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spending time with God in this way. I might want to spend a week with Him or a day, but this rigorous, religious almost mandatory quiet time at a given place, at a set time, with very specific activities can become drudgery rather than pleasure. And in many respects this could even begin to reduce my love of God.

Here's an example. If my son who I love said, "Now, dad, I am one busy dude. I mean, you just don't understand my schedule. I am so busy that I really am not going to have any time to talk to you during the day. But, I realize how much you love me and how much you desire for me talk to you. So I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. I'll get up every day at five o'clock and I'll call you on the phone, and we'll have about a half hour conversation together. And then I'll get on with my busy schedule." I'd say to my son, "That's not necessary. I'll wait until you do have time that you can spend with me!" I love my boy. I do want to have conversations with him. So I would also say to him, "You call me when you want to talk to me and I'll call you when I want to talk to you. And if 5 o'clock works for you, then it works for me. But, please be spontaneous and call when your heart is in it. I don't want to make a religion out of our relationship." Actually if he stopped calling me daily, I would likely be hurt even more. Whenever relationship **requires** anything of the other person, it becomes a religious encounter. If my son calls me at 5am I will take his call. However, I would hope his call was prompted by desire to share each others' hearts.

Here is one illustration that has come to mind at times when I was trying to explain this quiet time dilemma to people. I had some deacons in my church and we were really good buddies. We would go fishing together. We'd go up in the mountains together. Then I had to go to hospital for some extended time. So, my good buddies

came to visit me during visiting hours. They came in that hospital room and they didn't have a clue what to talk about. Neither did I. They kicked the bed, told me the temperature outside, told me I was inside and it was better for me to be here than outside. And I didn't know what to talk about. There is no news particularly happening in the hospital. So we mostly looked at each other in silence or watched TV together. It was so embarrassing.

By the third day I bought some books and as they came in the door, I handed out the books and I said, let's read because we don't know what to say. So let's get this over with. You could feel the tension drop when the bell rang ending visiting hours. But as soon as I got out of hospital, we were back to visiting again. It was chatting all day long, going fishing up in the mountains. That is what 'religion' does to a walk with God. We've made it visiting ours with God. When I first came to Christ, my whole life was alive with Jesus. And then I am told that you can't grow in Christ unless I have my quiet time. I had much preferred dialog with God all day long over limiting Him to designated visiting hours, reading books in a quiet time and space.

So for years I was having visiting hours (quiet time). And I had certain tasks to perform in the visitation. I had to read my Bible. Only God didn't seem to know what to say. At least that was what it seemed like as the scriptures did not energize me. This almost bored me to tears. And then I had to pray this list. Then I tried to pray all around the world. And I didn't know what to say about those strangers and strange places around the world. I soon realized that I was just waiting for the alarm to sound that the end of visiting hours with God had come.

I will never forget the day I gave up this 'quiet time' in exchange for something far more spontaneous and

delightful. It was a tremendous step of faith in Christ in me that day. It was almost like heresy. I was raised with that tradition. It was unspeakable to give up a quiet time. But then I suddenly realized I was hunting and fishing with God instead of visiting Him in the hospital. God and I chatted all day long. And we both had lots to say. And prayer became one of the most delightful things in my relationship with God!

Relative Truth Prevails

My dad had a political persuasion. He held a largely conservative world view. So naturally, wittingly or unwittingly, I became a conservative as well. We would sit around for hours, after I grew up, and talk about politics for hours. What were we talking about? Well, I was more or less repeating back to dad everything that he had spoken to me. But he and I were both enjoying it immensely. The fact of the matter is that the only conversation taking place was dad verbalizing to me what he had already taught me. And I was verbalizing back to him what he had already taught me.

I came to realize that's what true prayer is. I am listening to Heavenly Father, and verbalizing back to Him what He's already taught me through His Word. In this regard it is useful to revisit the humanity of Jesus. He was not continually calling people to pray. When He came into a pressurized situation, He didn't call His disciples to have a prayer meeting. Jesus simply spoke to the situation. I used to boast in the church that we pray for the sick. And then it was pointed out to me why Jesus never did. Instead He spoke to sickness. He spoke to the need. Obviously Jesus had quality time with his father. He spent all night with his father. He got up very early in the morning sometimes. But it was quality time in the everyday run of life. He simply experienced the Father in Him telling Him

what to do. He knew what His Father wanted Him to do and did it. So Jesus said to His disciples, “Now as the Father sent me, so send I you.” He now is in me and I see what He wants to do. I see through His eyes. He looks through my eyes. I know His desire. I speak it and we go on our way. Now that’s prayer!

I see the same relationship in prayer as I do everything else of the Christian life. Christ in and of Himself took no initiative. He did only what the Father did or told Him to do. True Biblical prayer is the same thing. I’ll pray what the Father tells me to pray. That’s Biblical prayer. Yeah. It’s inappropriate to pray through the phone book or even the membership directory of my church. It isn’t right to pray for strangers or anyone else unless the Holy Spirit brings them to mind. God puts His burden on your heart for something or someone specifically and you verbalize it.

Probably one of the most misunderstood subjects in the Bible is prayer. Practicing prayer without understanding the Exchanged Life, which is Christ doing the living for me, will result in powerless and fruitless prayers. When one has come to understand the grace of God in all of its fullness and come to understand that the Christian life is that ‘Christ Himself **is** you,’ all of your prayers are changed.

Unfortunately, I was practicing the Christian religion rather than living in an **intimate** relationship with God. I kept saying, “Christianity is relationship NOT religion.” But my practices screamed louder than my words that Christianity was only a religion to me. But now I am resting in Christ, abiding in Christ. And my prayer life is completely different, and to be sure, much more pleasant and effective.