



# The Thailand Challenge

... REACHING BUDDHISTS

#18

## The Selfless Believer

Mr. Song, a Thai believer said, *“Christ is my Master. I want to do what pleases Him.”*

The old selfish ‘he’ had been crucified with Christ. ‘Selflessness’ in daily life meant not giving in to his desires but choosing what pleased God through Christ’s resurrection power.

One of the major doctrines in Buddhist theory is that of non-ego/non-self/non person. The goal of this doctrine is to help the Buddhist in their development of selflessness or unselfishness. Coupled with the teaching of ‘non-self’, is the teaching of denial of selfish desires, with the aim to help individuals reach the end result: selflessness. Selflessness is a Buddhist aim similar to the teaching of Scripture, but with a different theoretical basis and method of achieving it.

According to Scripture, all people have a soul (Gen 2:7). God is a Spirit. Man’s contact with God is through the soul. Selflessness for the Christian is brought about by receiving the ‘selfless, sinless’ One’, Jesus Christ, into his soul. The more the believer yields to the selfless nature of Jesus Christ, the more selfless he becomes. Jesus calls the believer to self-denial (Mt. 16:24-25). It is not denying the fact of having an ego or being a person, but denying selfish desires. The Christian believes his selfish desires have been crucified through Christ’s death (Philippians 1:21). Living selflessly day by day is letting Christ have His way in the believers’ life.

### A Contextualized Bible Study\*

#### **Lesson #16: The Selfless Believer**

**Aim:** To help the student understand how to achieve a life lived completely for Christ.

#### **1. Introduction**

You have now studied the four stages of mind purification. From the **first stage** as a spiritual baby, you went on to the **second stage** of adding many virtues to your faith. The **third stage** you became secure in your relationship to God your Father learning that it is rooted in His mercy. In the **fourth stage** you accepted the challenge to strive to become one whom God can use in His work to bring the knowledge of Him to others. In this **fifth stage** (and final study of this course), you will learn that the perfectly selfless life comes from dying to self and its desires and letting Christ live His life in you. This is sometimes called the ‘exchanged life’. Jesus referred to it when He said that anyone coming after Him must deny him/herself and take up their cross and follow Him. The cross, in this case, refers to the will of God for our lives, instead of our own wills. Following God means doing what He tells us to do. (Read Philippians 1:21-23, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:8-12)

#### **2. Observations**

- a. In Phil. 1:21 what does Paul say he lives for? (Christ)
- b. According to Phil 1:22 what did Paul say he would work to produce if he continues to live? (fruit)
- c. In Phil. 1:23 which does Paul say is better, to continue to live in this world or to go to be with Christ? (to go to be with Christ)
- d. In Gal. 2:20 who does Paul say is really living in him, himself or Christ? (Christ)
- e. In Gal. 2:20 how does Paul relate to Christ’s crucifixion? (he says he has been crucified with Christ)
- f. According to Gal. 2:20 what is the basis on which he now lives his life? (by faith in Christ, the Son of God)
- g. In Gal. 2:20 what important point does he make about the Son of God in relation to himself? (the Son of God loved him and gave himself for him)
- h. In Phil 3:8 what does Paul say is the most important thing in his life? (See Phil. 4-6) (the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord).
- i. In the question concerning merit gained by keeping the law and that gained by faith in Christ (in Phil 3:9), which did Paul esteem higher? (the merit gained by faith in Christ)
- j. What were the four things in Phil 3:10 that Paul prized the most? (to know Christ, to know the power of his resurrection, to fellowship with him in suffering, and to be like him in his death)
- k. According to Phil 3:11 what is Paul aiming at after death? (the resurrection)
- l. In Phil 3:12 does Paul say that he thinks he is perfect? (no)
- m. In Phil. 3:12 what does Paul say he will persist in following after? (achievement of the purposes which Christ had in mind for him when He brought Paul to Himself.)

### 3. Understanding

- a. What do you understand Phil 1:21 to mean when Paul says that for him to live is to live for Christ? (whatever he does it is only to do what Christ wants him to do)
- b. What do you think the 'fruit' is that he mentions in Phil 1:22 (people coming to Christ or else people who already know Him having their lives changed through His teaching)
- c. Why is it better to go and be with Christ than to continue to live in this world (See Rev 21:4) (Because you can have a greater experience of Christ in heaven, and heaven is better than this world.)
- d. If Christ was living in Paul, does that mean that he did the things that Christ wanted him to do or the things that he himself wanted to do? (he did the things Christ wanted him to do)
- e. In Gal. 2:20, Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ but that he is still alive. What has been crucified- his selfish desires or his body? (his selfish desires)
- f. If a person lives by faith in Christ how is their life different from someone who does not live by faith in Christ? See Prov. 3:5-6 (they trust in Christ for everything in their lives)
- g. Paul says in Gal. 2:20 that Christ gave himself for Paul. When did Christ do that? (on the cross)
- h. When people come to the knowledge of Christ they sometimes have to give up things that were important to them before they knew Christ. In view of some of the things Paul had to give up, what are some of the things other people may have to give up? (Phil. 3:4-8) (trust in their own merit, trust in the importance of their family line or nationality, trust in the religious rituals they have performed, trust in their zeal)
- i. How do we receive the merit which is by faith? (Rom. 3:26) (God gives the merit that comes through faith to those who believe in Jesus) Phil. 3:9
- j. From Phil 3:10 what does it mean to 'know' Christ in the areas of life in which Paul aspires to know him? (ie. To suffer for Christ's cause would give opportunity to experience His presence with us in time of pain; to pray for his power to heal the sick or to open people's minds to knowledge of Him would help us experience His power; to spend time meditating on His word would help us experience His mind and mental viewpoint; to think about death as He did would help us have His attitude toward it).
- k. What do you understand about the kind of life a person has who has been resurrected from the dead? (John 20:11-29; 1 Cor. 15:3-7) (A resurrected life will be like Jesus' life after His resurrection)
- l. Paul believed that Christ had a purpose for his life. See Acts 9:10-16 to discover Christ's purpose in bringing Paul to know him. (That he would bring the gospel to the Gentiles).

### 4. Application

- a. What are some things you would have to change in your life in order to say as Paul did, "I live for Christ?" (students name things they chose, rather than what Christ would choose for them).
- b. From the following points, what kind of 'fruit' do you want your life to produce? ie. 1. Help people know Christ 2. Help people to know Christ better. Which groups of people do you want to help? Your family? Your business associates? Other? (students should think about 'evangelistic and building up' ministries for God and who God wants them to minister to)
- c. Would you prefer to continue living in this world or to go to be with Christ?
- d. Who is really living in you, Christ, yourself or a little of both? What are some of the changes you must make if it is to be Christ that really lives in you, not self? (let Christ have His way in everything)
- e. What must you do to be able to say, "I have been crucified with Christ?" (See Rom 6:12-13) (give up my selfish desires and actions and let Christ have full control of my life)
- f. If you lived by faith in the Son of God, what are some of the things you would not worry about? (See Mt. 6:25-34; 2 Tim. 1:12) (what wear, eat); (suffering)
- g. Did Christ give Himself for you? When? (on the cross)
- h. As you give Christ top priority in your life, what are some things you must reconsider your devotion to? (See Mt. 10:37, 19:29) (work, wife, husband, children)
- i. Are you relying only on the merit gained by faith in Christ or on that gained by keeping the moral laws as well? (See Phil 3:9)
- j. At this point in your life with God, which of the four things Paul aimed at in Phil. 3:10 do you want to make your aim?
- k. Paul thought the resurrection was so important that he made it the goal of his life. If it has not been of primary importance to you in the past what should you do to change this? (See Mt. 24: 36-42; 1 John 3:2-3) (weigh the importance of every action with the resurrection in mind)
- l. As God had a purpose for Paul's life, He has a purpose for yours. What have you discovered concerning His purpose for your life? (see John 3:16, 2 Pet. 3:9, Rom. 8:29) (to be conformed to Christ)
- m. What are some of the steps you must take to attain God's purpose for your life? (persist in following Him) How does God promise to help you do this? (See Ps. 32:8, Isa. 30:21, John 10:4) (God promises to guide me, tell me the way to take in times of decision, and to go before me).

### Meditate on Philippians 3:10

**"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death..."**

\*(Bible study lessons taken from the book *Self-understanding of Thai: Targeting a Message so it Hits the Mark*, by Marden St. John (Eng.), available from CLC bookstore, Thailand. Same material also available in Thai /Eng (student/ teacher manual), *Mind Purification* by Marden St. John)

### Prayer Starters

- For Thai Christians to believe that their selfish desires have been crucified with Christ, and to daily deny these desires, relying on Christ's resurrection power.
- For a desire to please their Master and do what He wants them to do.