

from self to Christ--hence for each of us it will be, "Not I, but Christ."

God has a natural law in force to the effect that we are conformed to that upon which we center our interest and love. Hawthorne brought out this fact in "The Great Stone Face." Then too, think of Germany some years ago, full of little Hitlers all because of fanatical devotion to a second-rate paper hanger! Here in our country comic books, radio, T.V. and movies have all contributed in giving us a rising generation of young Davey Crocketts, cowboys, gangsters, etc. And what of the believer? If we are attracted to this present evil world, we become increasingly worldly; if we pamper and live for self, we become more and more self-centered; but when we look unto Jesus Christ, we become more and more like Him.

Norman Douty writes, "If I am to be like Him, then God in His grace must do it, and the sooner I come to recognize it the sooner I will be delivered from another form of bondage. Throw down every endeavor and say, I cannot do it, the more I try the farther I get from His likeness. What shall I do? Ah, the Holy Spirit says, You cannot do it; just withdraw; come out of it. You have been in the arena, you have been endeavoring, you are a failure, come out and sit down, and as you sit there behold Him, look at Him. Don't try to be like Him, just look at Him. Just be occupied with Him. Forget about trying to be like Him. Instead of letting that fill your mind and heart, let Him fill it. Just behold Him, look upon Him through the Word. Come to the Word for one purpose and that is to meet the Lord. Not to get your mind crammed full of things about the sacred Word, but come to it to meet the Lord. Make it to be a medium, not of Biblical scholarship, but of

fellowship with Christ. Behold the Lord."

"Thou sayest, Fit me, fashion me for Thee. Stretch forth thine empty hands, and be thou still: Oh restless soul, thou dost but hinder Me By valiant purpose and by steadfast will. Behold the summer flowers beneath the sun, In stillness his great glory they behold; And sweetly thus his mighty work is done, And resting in his gladness they unfold. So are the sweetness and the joy Divine Thine, O beloved, and the work is Mine." --Ter Steegen

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). And what is His "good pleasure" He is "performing" in us? He is working everything together for this one purpose: "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11). This is life: "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). This is service: "And there were certain Greeks ... saying ... Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:20-21).

This article is taken from the wonderful little book, Principles of Spiritual Growth, authored by Miles J. Stanford.



Principles of Spiritual Growth Series - Lesson 4:

PURPOSE

By Miles J. Stanford

How wonderful and encouraging it is to know that our Heavenly Father has made it crystal clear in His Word exactly what His purpose is for each one of us. Now is the time, right in these next few moments, to make sure, on the authority of His eternal Word, as to His purpose for your personal life.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). The first Adam, the head of the human race, was made in God's image in the realm of personality, intellect, emotions, will, etc., so that there could be communion, fellowship, and cooperation between them; with God Sovereign, and man subject -- subject to His will, which is perfect freedom. But we know that Adam was beguiled into choosing his own way in preference to God's way, relying upon himself only, loving just himself. As a result, he immediately became self-centered instead of God-centered; dead to God who is the Source of all Life, dead in trespasses and sins. In this condition Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his [fallen] image" (Genesis 5:2). Thus he brought forth a sinful, ungodly, self-centered race, born "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

"God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by His son ... Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). Here is the image of God back on earth, this time in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45,47). Our natural birth made us members of the fallen, sinful first-Adam race. Our transition from the old sinful race to the new godly race is known as the "new birth." When we were born again, through "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), we were born

into Him—He became our life (see Col. 3:3, 4). "Thou were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree" (Rom. 11:24). "For as by one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Christ] shall many be made righteous" (5:19).

Our Heavenly Father is still carrying out His purpose of making man in His image. Although His original purpose is the same, He is not using the original man to bring it about. ALL is now centered in the Last Adam, our Lord Jesus. Being born into Him through faith, we became "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). And as the Lord Jesus is allowed to express Himself through our personality, this poor, sin-sick world will see "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). In I Corinthians 15:49 Paul gives us the heartening promise: "As we have borne the image of the earthy [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [Christ]."

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:28, 29). Here is the "good" for which God is working all things together—His original purpose of making us in His image, which is centered and expressed in His Son, Christ who is our life. Paul's determination for each of his converts was: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).

The open secret of healthy spiritual growth is to know and settle upon this fact as set forth in Romans 8:28, 29. When we see that all things are working together to make us more and

more like the Lord Jesus, we will not be frustrated and upset when some of these "things" are hard, difficult to understand, and often contain an element of death. We will be able to rest in our Lord Jesus and say to our Father, "Thy will be done." And our constant attitude of faith will be: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). This is our matriculation to spiritual maturity!

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). It is one thing to know what God's purpose is for our lives, and it is another to know something of the "how" as to entering into it all right here and now. One of God's most effective means in the process is failure. Many believers are simply frantic over the fact of failure in their lives, and they will go to all lengths in trying to hide it, ignore it, or rationalize about it. And all the time they are resisting the main instrument in the Father's hand for conforming us to the image of His Son!

Failure where self is concerned in our Christian life and service, is allowed and often engineered by God in order to turn us completely from ourselves unto His Source for our life -- Christ Jesus, who never fails. Rejoice, dear friend, in your need and hunger of heart, for God says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). As we, in our abject need, consistently and lovingly look upon our Lord Jesus revealed to us in the Word, the Holy Spirit will quietly and effortlessly change the center and source of our lives