

Maturing in Christ Jesus

2 Timothy 1:8-10, “*So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel...[The hardships that faithfulness to the Gospel entails]...by the power of God ...[In the strength that God gives you]...Who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but **BECAUSE OF HIS OWN PURPOSE** grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time...[Before time began God planned to give us, in Christ, His grace to achieve this purpose, however, it is only since our Savior, Jesus Christ has been revealed that the METHOD has become apparent]...but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*”

Adam was created *in the image of God*, however, he was innocent – as a new born baby is innocent. He was “*perfect*” in his innocency, however, he was wholly untried and undeveloped as a mature, spiritual being.

We must distinguish the difference between: *What man WAS by creation* – and – *What man was to BECOME by union with God!* Man was created a container to receive Life of God. However, he was given a choice. God intended him to become a SON in full Stature through inner *spiritual* development.

Man stood between two trees, with opportunity for development along two entirely different lines

1. He could eat of “*Tree of knowledge of good and evil*” and, thereby, develop his “*soul*” powers, independent of God, or,
2. He could eat of fruit of “*Tree of Life*” and develop his “*spirit*” by living in union with God

Man sinned, therefore, he needed to be put into right relationship with God.

We have become so occupied with the sin problem and the need to get back into a right relationship with God, that we have forgotten God’s ultimate goal for mankind. We mistakenly have made the escape from sin and going to heaven the goal of salvation. Because we have been so interested *only* in a “*way of escape*” from sin and its consequences, hell, we have settled down in our salvation from sin and fail to “*mature*” as God originally intended for man.

We, of course, must be “*redeemed!*” However, once the blood of Jesus Christ redeems us, we then face the same issues Adam dodged back in the Garden of Eden. We must seek to develop spiritually by receiving the very Life of God – live truly alive in Christ Jesus. We must learn to embrace God’s ultimate plan for mankind – divine fulfillment!

What does God desire of me?

If a sculptor was cutting away on a block of marble and, if that marble could speak, it might ask, “*What are you making out of me?*” If the sculptor replied, “*I really don’t have any plan, I’m just hacking away.*” Is it any wonder the marble, if it had feelings, would be bored, frustrated and feel life was empty? Well, the reason the Christian life to many has become humdrum and tiresome is because they fail to realize the purpose God has for them in their

You may find this hard to believe – but a certain university kept dogs for experimental purposes. They dogs were kept in two different cages and allowed the dogs in one of the cages to have fleas. They found that the fleas kept the dogs in that cage busy. However, the dogs without any fleas howled, barked and, in general, created all kinds of problems. Why? Animals were made with a certain amount of “energy” to expand, a reason to exist, if you please. This university found that if these dogs could not exert that energy, the price paid for lack of purpose resulted in restlessness and boredom.

Most bored people are not the *underprivileged*, but rather, the *over-privileged*. We must have a goal and know what it is. We will never be able to reach the destination God has for us until we know where going and what that goal is. We can never expect to fulfill our “*divine calling*” until we understand what it is.

In all kingdoms of life God has a purpose and that “*purpose*” is growth. God granted man something more than physical growth. God gave man the *moral* facilities of a mind and emotion, therefore, he has to *voluntarily* co-operate with God’s divine calling.

Let’s read Ephesians 1:1-10, “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **IN** Christ: According as He hath **chosen us in Him** before the foundation of the world [What did God choose us for?] – **that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will** [God destined us in love] – **to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even **in Him.**”***

This passage reveals what plan was in the very heart of God. Verses 4-6 state, “*He [God, the Father,] chose us **in Him** [in Christ Jesus] before the creation of the world **to be HOLY and BLAMELESS in His sight.** In love He predestined us...(destined us in love)...to be adopted as His sons **THROUGH** Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will, to the praise of His glorious grace...[The splendor of His grace]...which He has freely given us in the One He loves. His Beloved Son.”*

Because man sinned, he, of course, needed redemption, so, verse 7 tells us that provision was made available **IN** Christ Jesus. – “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace*” (verse 7).

Beginning with verse 8, Paul speaks of the wisdom of God revealed in His plan for man, the purpose He has for us – “*that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to his good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things*

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in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Ephesians 1:8-10).

God's plan for man has always been to become “*conformed [molded] into the image of His Son*” – *to be like Him – to be AS He is!* God desires that the Life of His Son become the very life of man. God's original plan, ***before the world***, *before man was ever created* (before man sinned), God determined to *share* Himself through His Son to mankind, whom He was to create!

Man sinned - turned to His own way, however, this did not change God’s plan one bit, God merely incorporated “*redemption*” through Jesus Christ.

After one receives Jesus Christ as his Savior, God desires that person to move along the highway of *spiritual development*. Calvary, the cross, is not finality, but rather, the beginning of the continuous work of the Holy Spirit to mature that believer into the image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Calvary makes it possible for one to *receive* God's life.

When any one believes and receives Jesus Christ as his Savior, he is then ready to enter into a glorious work of becoming like Christ.

Study again Romans 8:28 that says, “*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, **to them who are the called according to His purpose.***” However, verse 29 continues by tell us what God’s purpose is. It states, “*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate – **to be conformed to the image of His Son.***”