

To Be Like Jesus

1 John 2:28--3:3

And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, & not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, & it doth not yet appear what we shall be: -- but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; -- for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

Romans 8:29

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Paul writes in Romans 8:29, that we are “to be conformed to the image of (God’s) Son.” “To be conformed,” made like, not outwardly, but inwardly, in character!

Adoniram Judson Gordon (1836–1895) was an American Baptist preacher, writer, composer, & founder of Gordon College & Gordon–Conwell Theological Seminary. While standing on one of the streets of Boston & looking intently into a store window, Dr. A. J. Gordon suddenly became aware of an insistent tug upon his trouser leg. Turning, he saw a bright little girl **gazing at him** with a look that was close to **adoration**. His heart went out to her as he stooped down. He inquired, “Yes, my dear, what can I do for you?” Wishfully surveying Dr. Gordon’s soft warm eyes & sensitive, Spirit-lit countenance, she inquired innocently, “Please, Mister, **are you Jesus?**” The child was soon set straight, yet she had caught the reflected glow of the Savior in Dr. Gordon’s loving face.

Edwin R. Anderson, who relates this story, made it a matter of **earnest prayer** that the **secret of looking like Jesus** might be revealed to him. The answer came from a totally unexpected source! He writes, “I had been invited to attend a golden anniversary party. It was a gala evening. I remember standing alongside of an acquaintance watching the charming, graceful couple who had traveled the road of life together in such fine fashion. Then my friend made a chance remark, **but for me the words fell upon my ears as a direct message from the Lord**. ‘*Look at them,*’ he said softly. ‘*Why, they have been living together for so long that they have gotten to look like each other!*’ That was it! the secret, the answer. They were living together in every blessed sense; loving each other deeply, sharing in the fullest measure, veiling nothing. It was little wonder they had grown to resemble each other. **Is not that the best way in which we too may live so as to magnify & manifest the Lord Jesus Christ?** We must walk in sweet communion, & intimate fellowship with Him! We must search for nothing apart from His Word; we must aspire to nothing apart from His pleasure. This is the whole sweet secret of being **conformed** in the very image of God’s Son!”

According to the Apostle John (in 1 John 3:2), someday we will be **completely conformed** to His image, but, oh that we might be more like Him **even now**, to the praise of His glory!

God’s pattern for us is clear! Our text in Romans 8:29 is saying, “For God knew His people in advance, & He chose them **to become like His Son**, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers & sisters” (NLT). **Fashioned** in the **likeness** of the **image** of **God’s Son**. We are already appointed then to have the same image of His Son. **This is life’s highest privilege & honor** -- to be like Jesus!

Humanly we cannot do it! It is only possible by God’s enabling grace. Those whom God knew would respond to

His gift of Salvation, & yield their lives to Him, God laid out a plan for them, whereby His enabling grace, would make them “to be conformed in the image of His Son.”

Think of the millions of Christians down through the centuries who have been transformed into the likeness of Jesus, & **yet without any sacrifice of their own individuality!** Becoming more Christ-like doesn't mean losing your individually! **God created the characteristics that make you unique.** Christ-likeness is about transforming your **character**, not your **personality**. There are as many different varieties of Christlike characters as there are flowers in the woods & fields, & yet all of those thousands of Christians who have been brought into Christlikeness are but so many reflections of the **beauty** that is **in** Jesus Christ Himself. All those thousands of Christians, growing into His likeness, are drawing their beauty **from Him!** No wonder there is a **family resemblance** among the people of God: “brothers & sisters” in the Lord, with Jesus Christ being our Elder Brother, the firstborn among many children.

The goal of Divine purpose is complete Christlikeness! As the acorn finds its fulfillment in the majestic oak, we shall “**grow up** into Him” as Paul writes in Ephesians 4:15. As believers in Christ Jesus we are destined ultimately to bear the moral & spiritual likeness of our Lord & Master! It is not **heaven** we are to work toward, but rather the **beauty of His holiness!**

To be like Jesus -- to be like Jesus, All I ask -- to be like Him.

All thro' life's journey -- from earth to glory; All I ask -- to be like Him.

If you would **divide** men, preach doctrine & polices. If you would **unite** them, preach Christ!! I believe, according to the Scriptures, that there are three things we must experience in order to become like Jesus!

1. To Become like Christ we must Share in His Suffering!

God's number-one goal for you, dear friend, is not comfort, it's Christlikeness! Character, not comfort, is God's first priority! And to reach Christlikeness, you'll have to undergo some of the same experiences that Jesus went through. Experiences like, being misunderstood by your family; ridicule by church folk; rejected by the world; & disappointment by the people who say they love you. The Bible says we've been called to “share in His suffering ... that we may also share in His glory!” That's what Paul states in Romans 8:17, “So be that we **suffer** with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

A woman had encountered a great tragedy in her life. The heartache was so crushing & her sorrow so bitter, that she in distress exclaimed, “**I wish I'd never been made.**” With spiritual discernment, her friend answered: “**My dear, you are not fully made yet; you're only being made, & this is the Maker's process!**”

My friends, we can let God take our troubles, & make out of them a **garment of Christian fortitude**, which will not only warm **our** souls, but also serve to inspire **others!** Someone has noted the **apparent tragedies** which became the **making** of the following men: **Milton**, despite the blindness which overtook him, wrote the incomparable “*Paradise Lost*”. **Beethoven** became deaf, but nevertheless wrote mighty music which made him famous. George **Matheson** (of Scotland) went blind at college, but he refused to allow the calamity to frustrate his hopes, & finally came to a place of world-wide service both as preacher & writer. His majestic hymn, “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go” is a thing of beauty & a joy forever, & is universally sung throughout the world.

Does it seem to **you** as though every thing in life is going against you? Have friends forsaken you? Are your dreams & aspiration shattered? As you face these disillusionments, **take heart!** If you're a child of God, you may be **sure** that all things are working “for good”!! Rightly received, these experiences can truly be the making of you!!

Things don't just happen to us who love God, They're sent from His own dear hand,

That molded & shaped by events below, We'll match the pattern He's planned!

Where souls are being tried & tested, there God is hewing out pillars for His temple. Abundant life is not the absence of adversity; abundant life is growth in the midst of adversity. My friends, stay focused on God's **plan**, not your **pain**! "Let us run with patience (with endurance) the race that (God) has set before us. Looking unto Jesus the Author & Finisher of your faith: who for the joy that was set before Him, **endured the cross**" (Heb. 12:1-2) To become like Jesus, there will be times in which we must share in His suffering!

2. To Become like Christ we must Strive toward Total Obedience!

Christ was absorbed in doing the will of His Father. Christ was not only obedient to God's will, He was contented with it! "My meat," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me" (John 4:34). In the Garden, Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but thy will be done." The Apostle Paul came to this position. While in prison & privation, he could write, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, there with to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

What has God called & gifted you to do? Since God's Spirit lives inside us, God will reveal His will to our hearts as we seek Him in prayer. **Obedience unlocks God's power!** Through our choices, we choose to do the right thing, then trust God's Spirit to give us the power, love, faith, & wisdom to do it.

I want to live out God's will in my life! I don't know about you, but I will that my will be so lost in God's will, that I will never find my will, but only His will. If we are going to be like Jesus, we must learn to be completely obedient to God's Word, to God's will, to God's desire for our lives! I've long been impressed by that gospel song entitled, *Whatever It Takes*, by Lanny Wolfe: --

*There's a voice calling me From an old rugged tree
And it whispers draw closer to Me
Leave this world far behind -- there are new heights to climb
And a new place in Me you will find.*

*Take my houses & land -- change my dreams & all my plans
for I'm placing my whole life in Your hands
And if you call me today to a land far away
Lord, I'll go -- & your will obey.
For whatever it takes to draw closer to you Lord
That's what I'll be willing to do.
For whatever it takes **to be more like you**
That's what I'll be willing to do.*

*I'll trade sunshine for rain -- comfort for pain Oh that's what I'll be willing to do.
For whatever it takes, -- **for my will to break** Oh that's what I'll be willing to do.*

If Jesus was absorbed in doing the will of His Heavenly Father, then for us to be like Christ, we must also strive toward total & complete obedience to the will of God in our daily life.

3. To Become like Christ we must Seek His Purity!

John writes: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, & it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth himself**, even as He (Christ Jesus) is pure."

Some time ago a sign appeared in a dry cleaner's front window which read as follows: **"We clean everything**

but reputations.” The fact is, no machine has ever been invented, no bleaching fluid prepared, that can reach down deep into the troubled heart of man. Only the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, our Savior, can cleanse the human heart! **We purify ourselves then by receiving Him as our Purifier!** Having been forgiven & cleansed from sin, we must then **stay away from sin**, & keep ourselves **close** to Jesus Christ! My friends, **Christ cannot live in the parlor of your heart if you entertain the devil in the cellar of your thoughts!**

A driver’s license may be sufficient for identification when you cash a check, or use a credit card, at a department store. But your name on a church membership roll, a gold cross on a chain around your neck, or even a head full of Biblical knowledge, does **not** necessarily **identify you** as a child of God. **Those who are the children of the Heavenly Father have His nature! A holy walk is therefore our positive identification!!**

Becoming more Christlike then is the result of living free from sin! Since Jesus lived a sinless life, the more we consider ourselves “dead to sin” (Romans 6:11), & seek to live a life of purity, the more like Jesus we become! As we offer ourselves totally to God, sin is no longer our master, & we are more clearly identified with Christ! **Having been washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ, we must daily seek His purity in our hearts & lives.** Even as Jesus Christ lived a life of purity, unsullied with any uncleanness, so we must seek by His grace to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

Jeannette went to visit her Mother last July to help celebrate her mother’s 93rd birthday. Jeannette was gone for a long weekend. On Monday, knowing Jeannette was coming home, I got out the vacuum sweeper & swept the carpet; I dusted the furniture; I washed the dirty dishes; I cleaned the toilet bowls; I even cleaned the bathroom mirrors. What was I doing? I was preparing the house for her return! **In a far greater sense**, we should want to experience a clean heart as we await our Lord’s return.

My friends, we have the blessed hope of our Lord’s soon return! Jesus is coming soon, & we need to be clean vessels, anticipating His return! “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (3:3), so that, “we may have confidence, & not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (2:28). As we seek to live in the Purity of Christ, we **will** become more like Him!

Conclusion: Becoming more like Christ should be the **overwhelming desire**, the **passion**, of every truly born-again believer. It is encouraging to know that God has the same desire for us. In fact, the Bible says that God predestined us as believers, to be **conformed** to likeness of His Son! **Making us Christlike is God’s desire & intent for us!!**

Right now, God is **working in us**, to make us more like Jesus. As we continue to faithfully live “in Christ” we must **clothe ourselves** each day with the character & the likeness of Christ. It may mean that we will **share in His suffering**, as we **strive toward complete obedience, & daily seek His purity.** My friends, stay focused on God’s plan by keeping your eyes on Jesus Christ.

When you understand that God’s **objective** is to make you more like Christ, you’ll start praying fewer “**comfort me**” prayers, & pray more “**conform me**” prayers. **That’s how you become more like Jesus Christ!**

One day, one glorious day, the process will be complete: “When He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!” But until then, may our sincere prayer always be: --

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me
All His wonderful passion & purity.
O Thou Spirit Divine.
All my nature refine,*

Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

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October 19, 2014 -- Sunday Morning