

## **Discipleship - Session 23**

### **Conformed To The Image Of Christ**

Things we will cover this lesson:

1. What is God's eternal purpose?
2. We were created in His image.
3. The predestination of God.
4. The providence of God.
5. Being conformed to His image.

Assignment:

1. Continue ALONE prayer log. (One day -- 1/2 hour.) (One day -- 1 hour.)
2. Communing Word log.
3. Pray 2 Peter 1:1-15 into your life.
4. Pray the 6 Marks into your life.
5. Also go over the material you learned this session. Look up all the scriptures. Put this lesson to practice in your daily life.

## CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

As we have seen in recent lessons, knowing God and loving God are vital to a correct perspective in Christianity. In this lesson we will seek to understand the eternal purpose this loving God, who is our Father, has planned for our life.

Romans 8:28-29 <sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined **to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (NKJV)

The eternal purpose of God for your life is “**to be conformed to the image of His Son**”! This is what God is doing in your life every day. God is committed to your being like Jesus. Let us seek to understand how this is done.

### I. In His Image

Genesis 1:26-27 <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (NKJV)

Man was made in the image of God so we could have eternal fellowship with God, but sin entered and this image was marred when man sinned against God in the garden of Eden. Salvation is God beginning to restore the image that was marred. From salvation forward God is restoring what was lost in the fall by conforming us to the image of His Son. God is doing this on two levels:

#### 1.) **Future** - Someday all God’s children will be like Jesus!

1 John 3:2-3 <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (NKJV)

Philippians 1:6 <sup>6</sup> being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; (NKJV)

#### 2.) **Presently** - God is presently at work in your life to conform you to the image of His Son.

2 Corinthians 3:18 <sup>18</sup> But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image **from glory to glory**, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (NKJV)

Note: “*from glory to glory*” - Bit by bit, moment by moment, one degree at a time, slowly but surely, everyday, God is changing us from ourselves into His glory. His glory becomes our glory as we are conformed to His image. It is like looking into a mirror (the mirror being Jesus) and being changed into what you see in the mirror.

## II. The Predestination Of God

Romans 8:29 <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (NKJV)

Predestination simply means to be predetermined by God. It means something that God Himself has decided beforehand. When God predestines something to happen, you can be sure it will happen. Predestination assures us of this purpose of God which is to conform us to the image of His Son. It is our guarantee that someday we will look like Jesus. Nothing can keep it from happening.

Since God has already determined that this is going to happen to us, then let us be wise and cooperate with God in this being accomplished in our lives. Otherwise, we will find ourselves to be fighting against what God is doing in our lives.

## III. The Providence Of God

Romans 8:28 <sup>28</sup> And we know that **all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.** (NKJV)

Just as the predestination of God guarantees us of the purpose of God (to be conformed to the image of His Son), so the providence of God accomplishes this purpose of God in our lives.

Providence simply means to prearrange or to prepare in advance. This means that God saw everything beforehand that was going to happen to you and He has planned accordingly. God knows all. He knows what we need more than we know our needs. He is committed to conforming us to the image of His Son. He is much more interested in our character than He is in our wealth or our health (even though He cares very much about these things too).

According to Romans 8:28, everything that is happening in your life God has designed to work toward the development of the likeness of Christ in you. This means that God is using all the daily circumstances of life for your good. If we have learned to love God as we should, then we will be able to understand this. God only does good! With this understanding in mind, we will always know that God is working good even in the most traumatic situations of life we have to walk through.

This principle of life is greatly illustrated in the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis especially in chapters 45 and 50.

Note **Genesis 45:5, 7, and 8**. Look at these awesome words of faith spoken by Joseph after all he had been through for the last several years. This is faith! Joseph saw God at work in his life more than he saw his brothers or circumstances beyond his control.

Note again **Genesis 50:20**. When your love for God has grown to the place that you know that His love for you is the absolute greatest, then you will be able to understand that He is always doing good in your situation no matter how the circumstances of life may look. That is what Joseph knew. Even though his brothers had meant evil against him, Joseph knew God meant it for good!

God is not as interested in changing your circumstances as He is in your circumstances changing you! When the circumstances of life have finally changed you (your character) until you are more like Christ, then God will probably change your circumstances and give you a new set of circumstances so you can go even further down the road of being like Jesus until He comes.

Praise God that He loves us so very much! God will never give up on you.

#### IV. Identifications Of Being Conformed To His Image

In this section of this lesson, let us look at some things that will help us identify whether or not we have the attitude of wanting to be conformed to His image.

##### A. Paul's Attitude

Philippians 3:7-14 <sup>7</sup> But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yet indeed I also count all things loss for **the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; <sup>10</sup> **that I may know Him** and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, <sup>11</sup> if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> **I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**. (NKJV)

Paul was consumed with knowing Christ! (Remember our study on **KNOWING GOD**. Look again at John 17:3.) Anything of this world that would tend to take Paul's eyes off this lofty goal, Paul counted as rubbish (KJV says "dung".) Why? Paul understood he was created to know God and he knew the following:

Colossians 2:2-3 <sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, <sup>3</sup> **in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**. (NKJV)

##### B. Jesus Words Of Acceptance

Matthew 7:15-20 <sup>15</sup> "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> **You will know them by their fruits**. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> **Therefore by their fruits you will know them**. (NKJV)

Jesus said we would know if people are in the kingdom of God by their fruits. The problem is we often substitute the word "works" for the word "fruits". Many times we look at a person's work (even great ministries) and say, "What wonderful works are being done here for the Lord." But Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them." What are the fruits?

Among other things and very basic would have to be the “fruit of the Spirit” mentioned in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:22-23 <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (NKJV)

These are all attributes of the life of Jesus Christ. By being conformed to His life, we allow the Holy Spirit to work these fruits into our lives. When these fruits are evident in the life of a person who is a follower of Christ, then we “know” that person truly does belong to Christ and is in the process of becoming more like Him each day.

### C. Jesus’ Words Of Warning

Matthew 7:21-23 <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> "And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you**; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' " (NKJV)

Compare these words of warning to John 10:27-28.

John 10:27-28 <sup>27</sup> "My sheep hear My voice, **and I know them**, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (NKJV)

**SUMMATION STATEMENT: We were created to know God and to be conformed to the image of His Son. Nothing else in life will satisfy this deep longing in us. We may try to fill it with things, but nothing will satisfy us until we begin the process of knowing the Father and the Son. Our Father is committed to our being conformed to the image of His Son. Our lives will be much happier and easier when we become committed to it also. Paul did and we all admire his life. Let us go and do likewise.**