

Part 4
Goal of the Believer

The Required Ingredient: A Dying Body

Romans 8:28-30

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 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. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Here is a sad fact of history: two very short phrases in these verses have been two of the most fought over phrases in church history. “Whom He foreknew, these He predestinated” Countless books and sermons have been written on both sides, opposing the other, wars have been fought, nations destroyed in blood, as a result of these phrases, not the verse, this one word, “predestined.”

Some say, “God decided beforehand who would be saved and who wouldn’t.” Others say, “No, the foreknew is significant, God knew before hand whether you would choose Him or not, so His predestination has no effect on our choice.” Back and forth.

The most extraordinary thing is, in all the debate I have been acquainted with, no one, absolutely no one, has gone beyond the word “predestinated” and it becomes a debate over whether you’re predestined to go to heaven or predestined to go to hell.

Only, where did they get that? They didn’t get it from this verse.

It is astonishing, the barrier erected after the word “predestination.” I have never heard anyone go beyond it. Yet the rest of the verse is far, far more important than the first part. “To be conformed to the image of His Son.” We are looking at the determination and

intent of Almighty God. This is why God created everything – God wants many sons just like Jesus.

I intend to leave the foreknew and predestined side to Him. I simply believe what God says. If you don't want to believe, fine go on your way.

Here is how I read it for myself. "From the very beginning, God determined that I would be like Jesus." God is absolutely determined that I, Daniel Yordy, would be just like Jesus.

If I have learned anything about God, it is this: God gets what He wants. Do I believe it? Do I believe that my completion is to be just like Jesus?

Each of us interprets the Bible from our viewpoint and our viewpoint is determined by a handful of verses and concepts. I have watched God's people read right over awesome truths, and they don't even notice – because there is a little trigger in their mind that automatically shoots those things into heaven. "This will happen in heaven." Even though no mention is made of heaven or future.

Their defining verse, "The goal of the believer is to go to heaven when you die," rules how most believers read their Bible. Why would it be wrong to break with that and choose a different set of verses that rule how we read what God has spoken?

What if Romans 8:29 were our ruling verse? You have a ruling verse, even if it's not found in the New Testament! You have an already-made definition.

Why would it be wrong to pick a ruling verse that tells us exactly God's purpose for His creation. God was determined, before any sin came into the picture, to have many sons just like Jesus.

What if we approached every New Testament verse with this thought, "God is determined to make me just like Jesus, and this is how He is doing it"? "This is how its working"?

I read any verse, "Blessed is he whose sins are covered." I can go into the image of Christ, I don't have to worry about my sins.

Random verses. Pick any you want. “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Oh, this is how I am becoming like Jesus.

What if every verse we read in the New Testament spoke to us about how God is making us just like Jesus? And every verse in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is useful to us as long as we read it by the Spirit of God with God’s purpose in view.

How is God accomplishing this transformation in our lives?

2 Corinthians is nearly the most powerful book in the Bible.

2 Corinthians 3:18:

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.

We are beholding the Lord’s glory and by doing so we are being transformed into His same image. “Transformed” is the key word. And this is a glorious process; we are not going from shame to glory, but from glory to glory. We start in glory and we are transformed into further glory. This is an upward process.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This presentation of our bodies Paul develops starting in Romans 4, “Abraham did not consider his own body now dead” and culminating here in Romans 12, “present your body a living sacrifice.” That is a separate teaching that I develop in the *What Is Man* series.

Verse 2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” The key word is “transformed,” which happens by the renewing of our minds. God wants to change the way we think, about Him, about ourselves, about what He is doing in our lives.

We understand that becoming like Jesus is a process we are going through at the present time. Romans 8:28 “All things work together for good.” Everything we go through in this life, good and bad, hard and comfortable, God is working together for our good. Then in verse 29 God tells us what He means by “good.” Being conformed to the image of Jesus. When we stand as the image of Jesus, fully like Him, we will look back at everything in the course of our lives and we will see how God has used all of it to bring us to this state of being just like Jesus. God has worked it all out for our good.

Romans 8:17-18

And if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

That glory is the image of Jesus, being just like Jesus. Paul is saying that when we get to that place we will look back and we will see that everything we have gone through is absolutely wonderful. We will be amazed and astonished when we see how God has used it to bring us to this wonderful place that God calls “good.”

But we don't need to wait until then to believe that everything we are going through right now is wonderful and is working in us the image of Jesus.

We are becoming something, not going somewhere or getting something. We are becoming the image of His Son.

The whole Bible is about this process that began from before the creation of the world, from our conception in our mother's womb, from the moment we were born again. From the time we

were born again until the point that we are just like Jesus, God is working this transformation in our lives. Take away the assertion “Heaven is the place to go to” from that picture, it really doesn’t matter. Whether you’re on earth or in heaven, it is the same process and the same goal.

We know from the New Testament that those who are in heaven with Jesus are not finished. They are waiting for the same thing we are waiting for, the resurrection of their bodies. I do not doubt that God is still working in their lives. The process is not finished just because you go to heaven.

Heaven has no power to accomplish anything. The Holy Spirit carries with Him in His workings in our lives the power that transforms us. Not a geographical location or the realm of existence called heaven. It is the Holy Spirit who is in us working just as He is working in those who are in heaven. But those who are in heaven do not have their mortal bodies and so lack the vital ingredient needed to be fully transformed into the image of Christ.

God does not teach us what He is doing with those in heaven because it is not our business. But He does tell us they are waiting for the same thing we are: Romans 8:29, becoming just like Jesus.

You might think it would be far easier to be changed in heaven than here. I will show you from the New Testament that is absolutely not true.

God created this earth and our mortal bodies and subjected all of it to vanity for the sole purpose of using it to conform us to the image of His Son. Those who are in heaven are missing the very ingredients God created to obtain what He wants.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in

the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

The one thing you cannot do when you go to heaven is manifest the life of Jesus in your mortal flesh. You don't have any.

The whole plan of God, the key to God's purpose, is the human body. Without your body you lack the very thing God created for this transformation process to take place.

How can the very life of Jesus be revealed, "*apocalupsis*"ed, in your dying body, in your mortal flesh, if you don't have a dying body? That is the place God will make this thing real. There is where God is going to triumph. This process takes place here in this earth and in our bodies.

You die and go to heaven, you are with Jesus, it is a blessed place, but you no longer have the opportunity to see Him revealed in your dying body. That is the opportunity of eternity. Right now you have an opportunity to experience what you will never have opportunity again throughout all ages to come. It is a wonderful gift from God. Do not despise it.

Ephesians 3:17-20

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Let's look at this process that God is using. In each of the three primary verses that show how God is fulfilling Romans 8:29 in our lives, in each of these verses, we see a two-sided process, an inworking and an outworking. In Ephesians 3:19 we see the outworking of being filled with all the fullness of God. But in the preceding verses we see the inworking.

Verse 16: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” Always, always, we are talking about the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives from the inside out. Verse 17: “Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.”

What do you see when you look at your heart? Remember that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Our minds follow what we see. Jesus said that if your eye is single, that is, you see God, your whole body will be full of life. But if your eye be darkness, that is, if you see yourself as a fallen self in this world, your whole life will be full of darkness. What do you see when you look at your heart?

There are those believers who insist on using the Old Covenant where it says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” When they look at their hearts, they see selfishness and deceit. And so their whole Christian lives become an effort to stay away from their hearts and the selfishness and deceit that is there and to live in another person that is not you, Christ in you being separate from you: you, always having to escape from your own heart.

This is why God found fault with the Old Covenant, because it does not produce Christ in us, it was never intended to do so. Therefore He established a New Covenant, and in the New Covenant, when I look at my heart, I do not see selfishness or deceit. When I look at my human heart, I see Christ. How do I see Him? With my human understanding? Misreading all the variations that take place that the human heart goes through? If I go by what I see with my natural eyes, I might not arrive at the conclusion Paul arrives at here, I might agree with those who say it is all selfishness and deceit.

But I cannot do that. Paul says that when we look at our hearts, we see Christ because we believe what God says. God says Christ fills our hearts. When I look at my heart, I see Christ; I believe what God says. I no longer worry about the shades of emotion in my human heart, because it is inside the human part of me that Jesus is revealed.

We start there! When we look in our hearts and see Christ, we are rooted and grounded in love.

I have walked with God. I have been a believer in Jesus for more than 40 years, and I have sought to walk with Him as a disciple for more than 30 years. For most of those years I walked under the belief that my heart was my enemy; that my heart was filled with selfishness and deceit. I lived for years under the belief that God loves me, yes, but I must line up, I must come through, I must choose Him. That God requires me to prove that I love Him in return.

I can assure you of this, I am a failure, I am a disaster. If my former belief were true, I cannot be saved.

It took a deliverance and the mercy and kindness of God for me to be able to say for the first time, "God loves me." And to add nothing to it. "God loves me."

But that is not enough. We can accept mentally that God loves me. God has to love me because God loves everybody. But here is the bottom line. "God likes me." Can you say that? Can you look in the mirror, look at yourself when you're feeling your worst? When you have just blown it, go to the mirror, and look at yourself. Can you say, "God likes me"?

God likes me. Everything I am, He likes. I am special to Him. He likes me, and I am clean. I am clean! Rooted and grounded in love! It's not enough to believe that God loves you. If you still think, "Yes, He loves me, but I don't think He really likes me." Without realizing it, that is what we think. Our bottom line has been, "Yes I know God loves me, but I don't think He likes me because there is something terribly wrong inside of me."

Christ lives in our hearts by faith. What do you see when you look at yourself, your human self? What do you see, your human heart? Do you see Christ? Do you believe that He really likes you?

"Rooted and grounded in love." We cannot go forward, we can accomplish nothing unless we are rooted and grounded in the fact that God not only loves me, but He likes me. He likes to spend

time with me, He likes to listen to me talk, He likes the way I see things, He likes the things I like, He likes to do things with me, to be with me.

There is a religious thought that says, “Well, that would be condoning sin because I do things that are wrong.” Do not despise the blood of Jesus! Do not despise the blood of Jesus; do not minimize or put down the blood of Jesus. What is going to draw you away from those things that God doesn’t care for? Only one thing: your love for Him. What is it that makes us love Him? When we realize how much He likes us. When I know how much He likes to be with me, my heart melts and I avoid those things that would block my knowledge of His closeness to me. But if I’m not sure that He likes to be around me; yea, He loves me like a distant parent, but does He like me, does He like to be around me, my personal ways, does He like to listen to me talk?

You will always stay away from someone you think doesn’t really like you. What is the sin? The sin is staying away from Him because you think He doesn’t really like you. You can call outward things sin, but the real sin is staying away from Him because we think He doesn’t really like us.

Do not despise the blood of Jesus; it is more powerful than you know. It satisfies God more than you understand.

Let Jesus like you. Allow Him to enjoy being with you.

“Rooted and grounded in the love of God. That we may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height.”

What is that talking about? We have the capacity to contain God. How far can God reach in me? What is the width, the length, the height that God can move in me? Is God limited by making me His dwelling place? “To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

This is where it starts. If it is not a love relationship, God is not part of it. If it is a relationship based on fear, on duty, on obliga-

tion, on my measuring up, it is not a relationship God is involved with.

It begins as a love relationship. It begins when we look at our hearts, our heart of hearts, who we really are, what makes us tick, what makes us sing, what makes us live, do we see Christ? Does He love me? This is where it starts.