

Made For More: To Be More Like Jesus – Romans 8:28-30

As we begin our time together this morning, I want to draw your attention to what many Biblical scholars refer to as the most important place in all of Scripture. Their reasoning for this lies solely in Paul's teaching on the assurance of salvation. By the time we get to chapter 8 of Romans, we see that God has established a new purpose for those who choose to put their faith and trust in His Son as Savior and Lord. Found in these verses is a big clue for every believer as to what God's purpose is for your life. But, as I mentioned last week, and as we'll see Paul mention in our text, God's originally intended purpose is reserved for those who have chosen Jesus. Let's read a very familiar text from Romans 8. Read **Romans 8:28-30**.

Now, if you have your Bible open, I want you to underline and circle a few phrases. In verse twenty-eight, underline, "for those who love God" and "for those who are called" and "according to His purpose" Then I want you to circle, "for good". In verse twenty-nine, I want you to underline, "to be conformed" and circle "to the image of His Son." In verse thirty, I want you to underline, "He also called," "He also justified," and "He also glorified."

What you just circled in verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine is the biggest clue for you concerning God's purpose in your life. Too often we get hung up trying to discover God's plan, when His plan is already in place. How many times have you asked God to let you in on His plans? I know I have. I lost track of the times I've become frustrated with God because I feel as if He's intentionally leaving me in the dark. I can assure you though, God doesn't leave us in the dark as much as we think He does. I know this because of what Paul says here in these verses. God wants us to know with certainty that His plan is perfect and it has been in place from the very start. What you circled is God's general plan for your life. He wants you to become more like His Son and when you allow the process to occur, He makes sure it is good.

Take note, Paul is not saying and I'm not saying that you can become Jesus. That is not possible and will never be possible. He is saying that God's desire for every believer is that each believer becomes whole heartedly involved in a lifelong process of transformation. This process is one which develops in the believer identical characteristics to those of Jesus. Christians who embrace this process will begin seeing things from the perspective that Jesus sees things. Priorities will shift. Personalities will alter. The desires of the heart will change. Compassion for others will grow. Look back at verse twenty-eight, because this is one of those guarantees mentioned last week. For those who "love God," and "those who are called according to His purpose," what does the text say will happen? It says "ALL things" will work together for their good. You see, God will do good things in your life, if you love Him and follow His purpose. According to verse twenty-nine, God wants to turn every believer into spiritual imitators of His Son. God genuinely wants you to love Him. And when you decide to love Him, He honors that love by developing in you a Christlike character. Why? Because Jesus is the perfect standard. Jesus is the example. Jesus is the litmus test. When we embrace God's this purpose, God works to develop each of you into Godly men or women.

If you agree with this truth, the natural question then becomes, “HOW”? There are several things God will use throughout your life to help develop Christlike characteristics in your heart. Let me begin with the two most obvious. God uses His Word and He uses fellow Christians to disciple us. Jesus chose twelve men to follow Him. As they followed, He taught them and demonstrated for them all His characteristics. For us, since Jesus is not physically present, we must rely on the Bible and the examples set by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Think of spiritual growth in the same manner as you think of children growing. No child is born walking or talking. These things develop through a slow and steady process as the child moves from birth to toddlerhood, to adolescence, to early adulthood, to adulthood, and finally to senior adulthood. The same holds true for our spiritual growth. Paul defines this process for us in verse thirty. I like to think of it as moving from milk to meat, to manna.

Let me explain it this way. For those who choose Jesus, they answer the call of God to put all their trust in Him. By doing so, they become a part of God’s predetermined plan to save every person who chooses to be saved. Paul says, those who God calls will also be justified. And those who God justifies, will also be Glorified. What you need to see here and know here, spiritually speaking, is a believer cannot go from new birth directly to glorification. It requires a process. This process must include knowledge and truth found only in the Bible. It also includes other Christians helping you learn and grow. This is why I encourage everyone to get involved in more than just our Sunday morning worship service. Come to SS. Come to Bible study on Sunday night. Come to our fellowship events. Get involved in missions. Serve either in the church or in the community.

These are not the only methods used by God for our growth. He also uses our sufferings. Think about it, when is it that most people put most of their trust in God? It’s when they’re in trouble, or when they are going through a difficult season in life. I used to be critical of this behavior, but as mature spiritually, I have come to realize God uses these moments to develop us to be more like Christ. Jesus always trusted the Father. He never doubted Him, His plans, His ways, or His will. When we learn to place our trust in God, especially during our most difficult moments, God will use it to mold us and shape our character into something more like His Son. Remember, God uses *“ALL” things for the good of those called according to His purpose*. Back in chapter 5, Paul encourages us in verses 3-5. **Read Romans 5:3-5.**

Did you know, God does not delight in the attempts of Satan to trap us, but He will absolutely use Satan’s many temptations to develop a Christlike character in those who love Him. Most of the time, we get discouraged when we are tempted. We think temptation means we are flawed or that we’ve messed up. Satan loves to find our weakness and use that to tempt us. Temptation is not a sin. Sin is when we decide it’s ok to act upon the temptation. I’m going to make a statement that could be dangerous, so I want you to listen carefully to these words. If you are a Christian and temptations are coming at you all the time, perhaps it means you are growing spiritually. Satan doesn’t tempt the person who is already caught in the sin trap. There is no need. God loves to turn the temptations of the tempter into an opportunity to grow us spiritually. Understand this

though...just because you are seeing more temptations come your way does not mean you have achieved a more Christlike status. It just means Satan recognizes the work God is doing in your life and he's trying to hinder it. How did Jesus manage the tempter? He relied on the Word. He relied on the truth. Temptation begins in the mind. **Read Philippians 4:8-9.** When our mind shifts to the things of God, then we are more prepared to fend off the temptations. When we avert temptation after temptation, we can trust God's plan even more and know that we are becoming more like His Son.

One last thought today involves trespasses. What is a trespass? Many of you have heard this term for most of your church life. Especially, if you've paid attention to the model prayer when Jesus prayed, *"forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us."* A trespass is "an intentional hurt." All of us have been hurt by someone before. Some of us have also been the ones hurting someone else. Unintentional harm is not on the table here. Trespass occurs when there is an evil intent to harm. Remember our word from Romans 8:28, God uses "ALL" things for good. Yes, God, if you will allow it, can use pain caused by someone else to help develop a Christlike character in you. It's in these moments where God wants to teach us how to forgive.

Which of these characteristics is Christlike? Retaliation, or forgiveness? When we are hurt, we want to get the person back, or we want to cause them harm too. Jesus was unique for many reasons, but one of His most unique characteristics was that of forgiveness. He even asked God to forgive those who were killing him. *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* When we are struggling to forgive, we would be well served to remember first all the things Jesus forgave us for. When you grow to the point where forgiveness becomes more important than vengeance, you'll know you're on the right path. You'll know that you are becoming more like His Son.

Never forget, God has made you for more. He made you to become more like Jesus. He desires for you to develop and grow towards becoming more like His Son. It is a life-long process. There is no need to rush it, but there is a need to embrace it. Paul goes on to make a statement in chapter twelve that I think is key to embracing the truths you've been presented with today. **Read Romans 12:21.**