

It is God Which Worketh in You (2) His Divine Purposes

In the last article, we learned that God is working in us, in various ways through His mighty power. We know that God has a purpose for everything He does. This is also true concerning the work of God in His people. He has a plan and purpose for each of us.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote, *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end”* (Jer. 29:11). Another translation reads, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”*.

God has predestined every believer for glory and greatness. In fact, whenever we see the word, *“predestinate”*, in the Word of God, we can think of God’s divine purposes for us. One of those purposes is stated in the book of Ephesians, where Paul wrote in that connection, *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”* (Eph. 1:4-5).

How wonderful it is to learn that we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world! This tells us that the purposes that God has for us were also determined before the foundation of the world. Amazing to think that God’s plan of salvation and reconciliation involved us being adopted as children into the family of God. We learn that we become the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26).

Since we are the children of God, we have the privilege of addressing God as our Father. Paul says we are enabled to cry *“Abba Father”* (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). This is the cry of an infant child expressing love and total dependence on the Father. It is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus used this same expression, when He prayed to His heavenly Father in anticipation of the cross and the work of redemption that lay before Him (Mk. 14:36).

As the children of God, we enjoy all the benefits and privileges, as well as the responsibilities that are associated with being in the family of God. Being redeemed and reconciled to God, we enjoy the forgiveness of sins, peace with God and eternal life. But being a child of God also brings responsibilities. There is a certain holy standard, a certain conduct expected of those who belong to the family of God.

Paul quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah (52:11) *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”* (2nd Cor. 6:17-18). Paul admonished in the book of Ephesians, *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour”* (Eph. 5:1-2).

Since we have been brought from darkness into light, we should *“walk as children of light”* (Eph. 5:8). Or, as Paul exhorted in the book of Philippians, *“Let your conversation (your whole manner of life) be as becometh the gospel of Christ”*.

There is also the prospect of an inheritance that is reserved for us as those that belong to the family of God. Paul tells us in the book of Romans, that to be born again by the Spirit of God, is to be a child of God, and to be a child of God is to be, a joint-heir with the Lord Jesus Christ, *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”* (Rom. 8:14-17). Peter wrote of an inheritance that will never fade away, that is reserved in heaven for us (1st Pet. 1:4)

We shall never fully know all that awaits us in heaven, until we arrive there, but we are given glimpses of the future as we look into God's holy Word. There are unspeakable delights that will captivate our souls eternally, that are ours because of our link with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He promised, *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne"* (Rev. 3:21).

In addition to the adoption of children, God has another purpose for which He has predestinated us. Paul wrote in the book of Romans, *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son"* (Rom. 8:29). It is amazing to think that in the eternal purposes of God, who knew us before we were born into this world, He intended that every redeemed child of God, be conformed to image of His blessed Son.

This transformation occurs in a number of ways. Paul wrote in the verse prior, in Romans chapter 8, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Rom. 8:28). This indicates, to my mind at least, that the circumstances of life which we are called to pass through, are designed to conform us to the image of God's beloved Son.

In Paul's second letter to Corinth he wrote, *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2nd Cor. 3:18). I think of the Word of God as being a glass, a mirror reflection of the person of the Lord Jesus. As we muse upon its holy pages, in communion with Him, walking daily with Him, we become more like Him. Page after page brings before us glory upon glory, and the Holy Spirit working in us, as we muse and mediate upon Him, little by little transforms us into His blessed likeness.

So, hour by hour, day by day, through the various circumstances of life and through reading and mediating upon the Word of God, seeking to walk in obedience and subjection to its divine precepts, we are being conformed to the image of God's blessed Son.

If this be the case, what will it be when we finally look upon Him, in all His glory, but instant change into His likeness? Presently we look for the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote of that blessed occasion when He will come again for us, and the change that will take place, *"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself"* (Phil. 3:20-21).

The apostle John combines the two thoughts, that of being predestinated to the adoption of children and that of being predestinated to be conformed to the image of Gods' Son, in one tremendous statement, *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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"* (1st Jn. 3:2).

*O, such a grand and gladsome thought,
That I a child should be;
In to His royal family brought,
Who gave Himself for me.*

*Ransomed from the power of sin,
From darkness into light;
His holy Spirit dwells within,
In wondrous power and might.*

*As child of God, now destined heir,
And showered with His love;
Soon in His glorious throne shall share,
With ransomed saints above.*

*To walk with Christ, each day below,
Be this my highest aim;
And daily in His likeness grow,
And magnify His Name.*

*In sweet communion with my Lord,
On holy pages see;
His perfect image in God's Word,
'Til Christ be formed in me.*

*Until I see Him face to face
The Saviour, I adore;
'Til my expected change take place,
Upon that golden shore.
Bernie Payne*