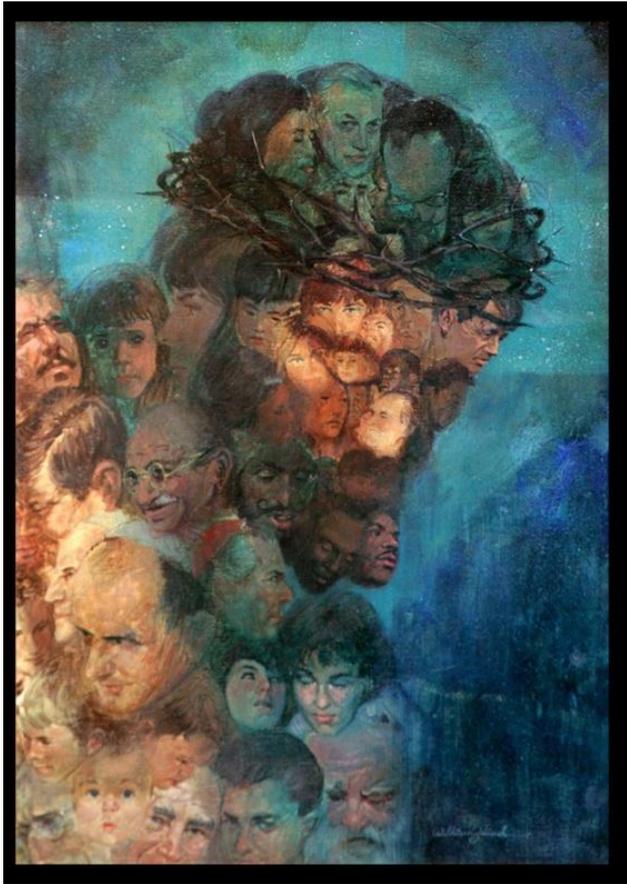


CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON

by Pastor Mike Taylor
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“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. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” (Romans 8:29-30)

How I love the book of Romans, especially the 8th chapter. Here the Apostle Paul chronicles the blessings and promises of God. Many will look at their Christian walk and ponder why things don't seem to work out as they envisioned. They grow discouraged and become listless in their daily walk with God. They wonder if God is really on their side. They fail to take hold of the promises of God, grasping it with both hands and endure what they must suffer in this life. Let us examine some of these promises and why you should be joyful and singing the praises of Almighty God for His wondrous mercy.

Look at the opening verses to this message and ponder for a moment the ramifications of what Paul is attempting to preach to them, and to us. This is not a confirmation of predestination, but God in His infinite knowledge, knew that you would accept payment for your sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. God who knows the beginning from the end, saw you make that heart felt decision to accept the gift provided by His Son, long before you even knew

it yourself. In no way does this foreknowledge affect your own self will to make that decision on your own. It's just that God saw you do it.

God has a purpose for all this and it was for your salvation before time began. Some will say, “Then why does God allow suffering in this world, if He called me out of it before time began.?” Why does God allow Christians to go through trials and tribulations of this world? God has a specific plan in place for refining each of us into the image of His Son. It's not random occurrences that we have no control over. I am a firm believer that God does not allow one thing to happen to a born again Christian unless He allows it. Why would God do that?

BORN IN SIN

Understand that man is a mortal being that has a sin nature that wars with the spiritual man daily. He will never totally escape it, until Jesus comes and perfects him by changing him from a mortal being into immortality and remove our sin nature for eternity. That will come when Jesus breaks through the clouds and calls His church to join Him at the changing of us, “in the twinkling of an eye”. Paul lamented over his sin nature in the previous chapter of Romans chapter 7:

15 “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”

Paul was distraught that he could not, nor could any other man escape his sin nature. But what does Paul say in the final verses?

“**24** O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Many don't know that Paul was making reference to a Roman practice for those condemned to be chained to a corpse and the soldiers betting on how long it would take for the condemned to resort to cannibalism to prevent their own death. It was an analogy that many during Paul's day would have recognized and being chained to a sinful nature of death. Who frees them from that body of death? Jesus Christ is who frees us.

If God allows us to be tested, to be refined, and to experience difficulties in this life, then what is the purpose for God allowing this to happen?

The Bible says that even a sparrow in the sky is so important to God that not one of them shall fall to the ground without His knowledge and permission.

29 “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:29-31)

What is the purpose here? Does God have a purpose? Concerning the analogy of a sparrow, it is more than mere rhetoric. If God cares about a sparrow and not one falls from the sky without it being part of His plan, then how likely is it that He allows you to undergo trials and tribulations for no purpose?

God foreknew us and determined to call us before He ever made His summons known to us. By doing so, He was making a prognosis. We are in this elite group, the called, only because the great God of heaven and earth specifically and personally summoned us by forcibly bringing the good news to our attention so we would be motivated to choose to respond freely to it.

THE LESSON OF JOB

Remember the story of Job? Here was a righteous man who endured unspeakable trials in his life. This was allowed to test Job and to refine him even through boils that raised up on his body, the loss of his family and all of his wealth. Now granted, this is an extreme case of God allowing adversity to come into a man's life, but can we draw a lesson from the book of Job? In the final analogy, Job learned that you must have total faith and reliance on your Heavenly Father. For He cares for us with a Divine love that was shown by the death of His only Son. It comes down to value.

If God values even a little sparrow and we are worth more than many sparrows, and worth more than the life of His only Son, then what was God's purpose? It was that God saw you as valuable. *Your* value, in God's eyes, is such that Jesus Christ died in your place so that you might have everlasting life. *Your purpose* is also clearly outlined in Scripture. When you were lost, your *purpose* was to be saved.

It really isn't that difficult a concept, if we are willing to accept God as He describes Himself and accept the Bible as a true record.

You were to be conformed to His Son. "Conformed" is the English rendering of the Greek word, *summorphos* meaning, "jointly formed, fashioned like unto." Note that *you* didn't conform yourself to the image of His Son.

It was done *for* you. You were foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and glorified – all in the *past tense* indicating that it is *already* accomplished.

It doesn't say you *will be* justified and glorified when you get to heaven. It says it was *already accomplished* in heaven before the world began. I have often mentioned that there is only one reason that you and I were born into this world, ultimately. That is, what will you do with the man, Jesus Christ? See, God knows everything...because He is God. He knows if you will accept, but He also knows you who will reject the call of the Holy Spirit.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." "In hope of eternal life, which God, *that cannot lie*, promised before the world began." (**Titus 1:2**) God cannot lie. Eternal life was promised, *not according to our works*, before the world began. You were foreknown, predestinated, conformed, called, justified and glorified.

It isn't a linguistic trick. It isn't a mistranslation or a misunderstanding of either the original Greek or in our English translation.

To *everything* there is a purpose, the Bible says, and for *every* purpose God has appointed a time.

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44)

THE COMING TRIBULATION

If we are being refined now, made into the image of His Son after conversion and being baptized, then what is the point of the Church going through the Tribulation that is coming at us, like a locomotive? What is the purpose of the Tribulation? In my discernment of what the Bible teaches, the only answer is two objectives by God.

to bring Israel to the knowledge of her Messiah that they had crucified 2000 years ago and to cry out in agony, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

to completely destroy all rebellion of a Christ rejecting world and purify the world of those who take the mark of the beast, as prophesied in Revelation.

It is called the *Tribulation Period*. (Greek: *thlipsis*: "affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble"). And, it is called, "The time of *Jacob's trouble*".

The affliction, anguish, burden, persecution, tribulation and trouble of this time are to be inflicted upon all those that dwell upon the earth. The Bible tells us that it will be meted out in the form of 21 judgments.

This period of judgment is set aside for two distinct purposes, as mentioned -- to judge a Christ-rejecting world and to bring about the national redemption of Israel.

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (**Romans 11:25-27**) Those that hold to a literal "refining" of the church during the Tribulation in addition to the defined two reasons noted above, negate the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ. To embrace a Pre-wrath, or a post-tribulation model is to

diminish the work of the cross. Was Jesus sacrifice not enough? Was it lacking in its freeing the Christian from the penalty of enduring God's wrath that shall cover the whole earth?

When are we forgiven our sins? Is it not when we accept Jesus by faith and the Holy Spirit dwells with our spirit? Then why must we be refined? The concept smacks of Catholic purgatory that says we must endure punishment before we are allowed to enter into heaven. So if there are extra requirements that must be brought to the table, they are extra requirements imposed by you, not by God. God says, "**whosoever will.**"

At the moment of salvation, the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us and bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

"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; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. " (Romans 8:16-17)

That leads to another problem with the concept of error that the church of Jesus Christ must endure the Tribulation. Jesus promised us that He would send us the "Comforter" the Holy Spirit and He would never leave us or forsake us.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17, Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18, I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. " (John 14:16-18)

Jesus said He would never leave us alone, but the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is taken out of the world to allow the indwelling of the spirit of Satan in the Anti-Christ and he will overcome the "saints"

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1st John 5:4-5)

But Paul reveals that the Holy Spirit will be taken out of this world!!

6, "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7, For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8, And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: " (II Thessalonians 2:6-8)

But the Anti-Christ overcomes the Tribulation saints.....

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." (Revelation 13:7)

So which is it? God dwells with us forever, but leaves us defenseless and powerless to the conquest of the Anti-Christ? Since God cannot lie, I choose to believe that if the Holy Spirit is removed to make way for the spirit of Anti-Christ that shall overcome the saints, then since the Holy Spirit was removed, then so is the Church.

Christians undergo trials and tribulations in this life according to His purposes. What is the purpose behind

Blood-bought, eternally-saved, indwelt Christians being separated from the indwelling Holy Spirit so that they can undergo *half* of all of the judgment period set aside for those that rejected Christ?

Why would the Lord subject His own Bride to judgment for sin after He had already redeemed that Bride from judgment for sin at the Cross?

We endure the consequences of sin all the time because the world is created in sin, but consequences aren't the same as judgment.

WE ARE BEING TRANSFORMED NOW

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2, And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3, For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:1-3)

The church has a glorious future that no one can begin to imagine. As it is written "eye hath not seen, or ear heard, or entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love Him."

And the Bible states further.....

14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15, For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16, The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17, And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

18, For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:14-18)

WILL YOU BE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE HEIRS OF GOD?

One fly in the ointment so to speak, those who are being made into the image of God are those who have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and God knows in advance who that person is, each of us. Those who read this message, or have not taken the free gift of eternal life with a repentant heart (meaning change your mind about sin) cannot embrace the glory that awaits those that have. So you ask me, what must I do to have this type of eternal existence and a glorious future?

1. Realize you are a sinner. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) 2. Realize that God made a way for those sins to be forgiven and live with God forever. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) 3. Confession before God, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9)

You say, that "sounds simple"...yes, it is simple that a child can understand it...I did when I was 10 years old. But you must believe in your heart, not just in your head. It must enter into a humbled and contrite heart that knows that without God, you are doomed for a devil's hell, or to experience that hell on earth, called the Tribulation and possibly even the Lake of Fire, if those years don't call you to repentance before God. The horrors of the period

are too gruesome to even ponder, as hardly any flesh will be saved and many will be martyred, by beheading. Sounds awful and it's all right there in your Bible in the last book of Revelation.

The saints of the church are being conformed and transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, one lesson at a time. I know that I will never be perfect in this life, but I will be perfect in the next life when Jesus comes for me and all who believe by faith in His death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father in Heaven. But it's not about works, but His mercy and grace....and the best part...IT'S FREE FOR THE ASKING....We await the coming of our Lord with a trumpet blast, that could sound very soon...very soon because all the signs point to this great event on the near horizon. I've written extensively in detail of that coming period on my website. If you have time, check them out.

Don't wait too long, as you are not promised even tomorrow. To stand before a Holy God and not have Jesus as your substitute payment for your sins, is a vision I wish for no one, no matter what you have done. Jesus awaits your decision...call on Him today...BE TRANSFORMED.

This is pastor Mike Taylor, praying your acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Should you need counseling, prayer, or just a listening ear, email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net, or visit me online for more biblical teachings from the Word of God, at www.churchofgod-usa.org. God bless you all.....

TILL WE MEET AT JESUS FEET