

CHAPTER 5

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER TO CHANGE US

THE FATHER PLANNED ALL THINGS TO CONFORM US TO THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON

I stood in our living room staring at the little white casket of our baby boy—Daniel Josiah Timothy, born six months previously. The names that we had given him showed our great hope that he grow up to be a special man of God. As I stood there, filled with grief and confusion, a scripture suddenly came to mind:

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 KJV)

My reaction to this verse was a combination of anger, rebellion, and unbelief, as I defiantly questioned God as to what good could there possibly be in the death of our baby.

In a few minutes, I had a strong impulse—to get my Bible and read that verse. I was not sure why I should, for I knew the verse by heart; we used to sing it when I was a child. However, it seemed very important that I open my Bible and read it again. And, yes, I found it said just what I had remembered. Reading the words did not make me feel any better—actually worse.

Then my eyes caught the words of the next verse—verse 29; I do not remember seeing these words before, although I must have read this verse several times. Nor did I remember any speaker in the church ever commenting on these words or connecting them to the previous verse. The words that are emphasized below seemed to jump right off the page:

For whom He did foreknow, **He also did predestinate to be conformed to the likeness of His Son** that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom. 8:29 KJV).

In a flash of divine revelation, I suddenly knew what The word “good” in verse 28 really referred to—becoming like Jesus. God the Father intended to use this tragedy somehow to change me to be like His Son. This revelation did not instantly heal my grief or confusion, but it did give some hope that somehow what had happened could be used of God in changing me as He had planned. I did not understand how, but I knew God had spoken to me and I should pay attention to what He had said. Further, I had no idea at all then of the extent of how much I needed to be changed, just that changes were necessary and good. I had a hard time then realizing and admitting that I needed to be changed; it took quite a number of years for the Lord to bring me to the place where I really accepted the need to be changed and where I really wanted such changes to take place.

Driving back and forth to the school where I taught, I repeated these verses many times and asked God to help me really perceive and believe what they said. I felt that by repeating the verses many times every day, faith would come into my spirit as I heard the Word of the Lord over and over. I remembered the words in Romans 10:17 that “faith comes from hearing the message.” I figured that singing a hymn or chorus that expressed the truth of these verses would be helpful, but I could not remember any that proclaimed the message of these verses clearly.

Consequently, I thought I should try to create my own song. As I sang phrases of Romans 8:28 and 29 over and over, they soon gelled into a song, which I entitled “My Glorious Destiny”. Here is the first verse and chorus—a prayer and a confession that I hope you will pray sincerely with me:

Lord, come and touch afresh my eyes
That I more clearly see,
In ev'rything that comes my way,
Your perfect love for me.
That I may know no bitterness
Nor ever complain,
But, always full of thankfulness,
Your goodness I'll proclaim.

[Chorus] I praise You, Lord, You've planned ev'rything
To make a wonderful change in me.
Lord Jesus Christ, to become like You –
O, what a glorious destiny!

The power in declaring the truth in the chorus of this song has helped me through many difficult times. Sometimes, when I have a problem with somebody, it helps me to sing “You've planned *everyone* to make a wonderful change in me.”

I gradually became aware that I really did not know much about what it really meant to be like Jesus and that knowing what He is like is a vital part of the changing process. The following scripture emphasized that I needed to focus on Jesus Himself to become like Him:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18)

This scripture prompted me to add a second verse to “My Glorious Destiny”:

Lord, come and touch afresh my eyes
To see at Calvary
The Father's glorious love shine forth
As, Jesus, You die for me.
Lord Jesus, as I behold Your love,
Let Your glory transform me;
May I into Your image come –
O, what a glorious destiny!

I must have thought I knew a little about what that second verse meant when I wrote it; however, it was about five years ago (2000) that scales fell off my spiritual eyes, as I realized much more deeply that to be like Jesus was essentially to be like Him in His suffering and death. The teaching of the Cross as a paradigm has given me exceedingly richer meanings to my experiences and spiritual revelations.

It is crucial to surrender every day to the process of being conformed to Jesus and His death. In that commitment, we choose to see all things as being used of God to change us; we repent, therefore, of all complaining and of our rebellion against anything or anybody in our lives. This does not mean that we will just be passive in our response to everything, but we will seek to be changed first by the Lord through the circumstances to express better Jesus' nature in our actions to effect changes that need to be made.

Daily adoration of Jesus has been the most significant aspect of my devotional life, focusing on the attributes of Jesus that shone forth during His suffering and death. Worship of God as seen in Jesus allows me to enjoy the results of the Cross and leads me to daily seek to be changed more to reflect the paradigm of the Cross. **Imagine how awesome it would be if you and every Christian you know would sincerely repeat every day the prayers contained in the song above!**

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