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Transforming Into The Same Image

Dear Friend,

If we only knew how much of what we accept as Truth is nothing more than man made ideas that have been passed on from one generation to the next and not really Truth at all, I believe we would be shocked. When a person makes the decision to pray in tongues they are effectively making the decision to empower the Holy Ghost to pull back the religious facade, show it for what it is, and reveal the Truth of God's Word. Be prepared when you venture down this path because you are going to meet the enemy in a way that you never have before. He wants the Truth hidden and will do whatever it takes to keep it hidden, so prepare yourself for a fight.

My responsibility is to pray in tongues and the Holy Ghost chooses what He wants to teach me. What He teaches me I, in turn, teach you. Your responsibility is to pray and ask the Holy Ghost to confirm or disprove what you are taught, accept the Truth and reject the error.

Part of this lesson addresses one of those issues we may have assumed to know the answer to because of what has been passed on to us from generations gone by. Does God set limits on Himself? If you answer, "No", then tell me the last time God forced you to do something? Does God have the capability to make a person do whatever He might want them to do? He's God, He's all powerful, so clearly He is capable. Yet, we know that He doesn't, so He has set a limit on His own ability in order to preserve our free will. Is that the only area God has limited Himself?

Let's consider that in God's wisdom He determined that for Him to know what our decisions were going to be before we made them would adversely affect our free will. As a result, might He choose to limit His limitless ability to know everything, specifically with regard to the choices we would make? I am not suggesting that God doesn't have the capability of knowing what our decisions are going to be

before we make them, but rather that He chooses not to know in advance so as not to, in any way, adversely affect our free will. Keep this in mind as you read and see if we have allowed some man made ideas to take hold from past generations. Now, on with the lesson.

Have you ever prayed like this? **“Father, I have no idea what to do. Will You please tell me what I’m supposed to do?”** For some, it might sound more like begging than praying. “Please God. Please tell me what to do. I mean it, God; I will do whatever You tell me to do. Just, please tell me, oh and lots of details please.” To hear the way some people pray, you would think God has **pre-scripted** every detail of our lives in advance and we are simply trying to convince Him we are ready to be told what to do next. For God to predetermine our choices makes having a free will unnecessary.

Please don’t misunderstand; **we should want to do what God wants us to do.** There’s no mistaking the fact that God **does** have a set plan for all of mankind and we should want our lives to fit harmoniously into His plan, which praying in tongues facilitates. However, our lives fitting harmoniously into His set plan, by our choice, is quite different than the idea that He has predetermined all our decisions for us in advance and we need only to be told how we are to decide. Not even Jesus had every detail of His life, every decision He was to make, predetermined by God. I know that statement is difficult to believe but look at this. (Luke 22:42)

“Saying, ‘Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but thine, be done.’ ”

Jesus is asking His Father if his sacrifice in mankind’s redemption could be reconsidered. The fact that Jesus would even make such a request shows that His Father had not already expressly told Him “You **will** do this!” The point to be made here is that there is a difference between knowing God’s desire, as Jesus did, and choosing to do accordingly, verses God dictating what we do and nullifying our choice in the matter. Even Jesus had a choice. With that in mind, notice how God made provision for man to walk in varying levels of His will. (Romans 12:2)

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

By continuing to renew our mind with the Truth, Paul tells us to expect a proving process to take place. By this proving process, indicative of a process for

determining an unknown outcome, we will discover what is the good, and acceptable, and the perfect will of God. This does not suggest that God demands perfection every time. In fact, it speaks more to the fact that as we are maturing spiritually we can remain within His will. That is great news because I for one am still growing.

Going back to Jesus; the prophets had prophesied God's plan for Jesus' redemption of man, but the **script** of Jesus' life was being written with each decision He made. If Jesus' decisions had already been predetermined, **then why would Jesus ask for another solution?** The plan prophesied by the prophets was God's desire for Jesus, but the realizing of that plan was left to Jesus. Surely we don't see God the Father telling Jesus in advance, "Son, I've made the decision for You. You will do this." Yes, the Father had a plan, but Jesus had a choice.

The fact of the matter is, although Jesus knew God's set plan for mankind and His place in it, according to the prophets, He Himself did not know with a certainty, in advance, what His decisions on any given day would be. What we will do in life is only known once we decide. Yes, the prophets prophesied of Jesus' birth, life and ministry. But, as in the case of His virgin birth, their prophecies did not make His birth a foregone conclusion in Mary's life because Mary still had to choose to believe in order for it to come to pass. As for Jesus' prayer, why pray it if He had no choice in the matter and His participation was a foregone conclusion?

What could be wrong with God having a static, pre-determined, plan for each of us, individually? For mankind to have to try and follow a static, pre-scripted, set in stone agenda from God would be impossible. Either mankind has free will or they don't and God paid a huge price in the life of Jesus so that man's free will would stay intact. After paying such a tremendous price, God is not about to override man's free will for anything.

It's easy to think that God, who knows everything, should show us what decisions we are going to make in advance, along with the outcome of those decisions. Is that what we are expecting, either consciously or unconsciously? How can God preserve our free will if He is predetermining our decisions? Furthermore, ***Does God ask us to do things He knows in advance we are not going to do?***

If He does, then His foreknowledge of our answer means that His request sets us up for failure. In other words, for God to direct us to do something, which He has foreknowledge we will disobey, then He is choosing for us to be in disobedience. **Or, has God somehow limited His knowledge of what we will decide, for the**

sake of preserving our free will? We get a glimpse of this when God directed Abraham to offer up Isaac. Think about the comments God made to Abraham after He asked him to offer up his promised son, Isaac, on the altar. (Genesis 22:12)

“And He said (the angel of the Lord), ‘Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.’ ”

How is it that an all-knowing God can make the statement, “now I know”? When you look up the word “now” it means “now” and the word “know” means: **“to know, learn to know, to perceive, to know by experience”**. God cannot lie, so when He said, “now I know”, it appears to mean that before Abraham’s act of obedience God did not know what Abraham would choose.

Once again we ask, has God self-imposed limitations on His knowledge of our decisions, so as to preserve our free will? Can an all-knowing God set limits on Himself? **He has certainly limited Himself from making us do what He wants us to do.** It would seem that the possibility does exist that He has also limited Himself in this area of knowing our decisions before we make them.

God established His pattern for how He would interact with His creation by what He said to the first man, Adam. Did God say, “Okay Adam, first of all, every last detail of your life has already been predetermined so if you have any questions what to do next just ask Me and I will tell you what’s next on the agenda.”? In the minds of many believers, this is what they are expecting from God. If God wanted man to do exactly as He predetermined, then He should have made a robot. God wanted a son with a free will to choose whether or not he would love his Father and willingly obey Him.

When we read through the first few chapters of Genesis it is important to keep some things in mind. Keep in mind that before Adam opened his eyes for the first time he never existed. Adam had no history from which to draw in making his decisions. There were no books for him to read to tell him how to act, what to do, or what to say to God. So, how was it that Adam understood so much from the start? Apparently, Adam opened his eyes and knew who God was, recognized God to be His Father, and knew immediately what it meant to be God’s son. Adam just opened his eyes and understood.

Put yourself in Adam’s shoes, or bare feet, and imagine after such a brief existence God giving you dominion over the earth and establishing you as the authority in the earth. Wouldn’t you think there would have been some kind of

owner's manual prepared by God to give to Adam so he would know how to run the earth? No need, Adam was equipped to oversee the earth from the start. God merely established some parameters within which Adam was to function, establishing God's ultimate rule and Adam as under ruler. (Genesis 1:29)

“And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.’ ”

We see a little more detail in Genesis chapter 2. (Genesis 2:15-17)

“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. (16) And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’ ”

These brief instructions from God were all that Adam needed to oversee the earth and remain in God's perfect will. Let's put this into perspective. Imagine if a person from our world today was placed in a situation like Adam. They could be the smartest person this world had to offer being put in charge of their own planet. If they were only given the instructions Adam was given, no books to tell them how to rule, or what God's expectations were, how do you think they would do? Clearly, Adam had been created with something that enabled him to hear God's general directions and be well equipped to succeed. What was it that endowed Adam so well?

We know that Adam was spiritually alive with the life of God, which gave him immediate, unencumbered, access to God. He was also perfect in every way. But, there had to have been something that enabled Adam to function in the earth harmoniously with God's overall objective, even though Adam had limited details from God to follow. With no books to read or experiences to draw from to tell him what God's expectations were, whatever Adam had he was created with it and it made him instantly capable to fulfill his place as God's son, having no need to be taught what a son was or who God was or how he got there.

Sure, Adam was free to ask God anything at any time and God would have answered. But, do we think God created a man who constantly needed to ask Him what to do next? Adam is not described as being like a five-year-old asking God one question after another. In no way can we picture Adam being so ill prepared to govern his own planet that he had to go to God for every decision, nor do we see God dictating to Adam every detail of His life. Something had to

be present within Adam to guide him in making his decisions; a depth of understanding of who he had been created that enabled him to competently rule a planet. What was it? (Genesis 1:26)

“And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:....’ ”

Then, again in the next verse the word image is used. (Genesis 1:27)

“So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”

Adam was created in the beginning equipped with a fully functioning image of what it meant to be a son of God and how a son of God should function in the earth.

Adam had no need to be schooled on the finer points of being a son of God because he came into existence fully understanding this concept. All that it meant to be a son of God was contained within the image in which God created Adam. Otherwise, imagine all the endless questions Adam would have for God to answer in order to begin to understand what God wanted him to do.

Maybe this illustration will help. Years ago a company I worked for provided each of its employees with a device called a PDA, Personal Digital Assistant. It was a handheld computer used by each employee to give them guidance throughout their work day. My job as a supervisor was to provide each new employee with a PDA, which required me to program the PDA before giving it to the employee. The term used for this process was called, “putting an image” on the PDA. In this illustration the PDA will represent the Bible that has within its pages the image of being a son of God.

With PDA in hand, my employees would head into their assigned stores each day and perform their duties. I had employees spread out all over South Florida so it was impossible for me to be with them each day. If they had questions they could call me and I would help them, but they held within their hands everything they needed; the PDA with the image. Just as the image gave them an understanding of the company’s expectations on a daily basis; the image of being a son of God was Adam’s guide as to how to “dress and to keep” the Garden of Eden.

The employees utilized their PDAs to guide them in executing their daily tasks. At night they would connect their PDA with the company’s main computer over the Internet. It was then that a specific task might be downloaded to their

devices to be accomplished the next day. When no special assignments were issued, the employee proceeded to execute their normal duties, already outlined on their PDA.

No one thought, “I have no special assignments today so I’ll just sit in the break room and do nothing”, nor did they need to call me and ask for something to do that day. **This is where I believe many Christians live and die.** They have a “PDA” in hand, the Bible, with a beautiful image of being a son of God, which they are to transform to, and yet they spend their lives waiting for God to tell them what to do next. My employees knew that I expected them to follow their PDAs without having to be told every single thing to do.

A point that I believe is important to grasp is that like Adam, my employees had a lot of freedom in determining how their time would be spent each day, so long as they remained within the established parameters and completed any special tasks they were given. Their job was to provide vendor services for specific manufacturers in large home improvement stores. So, let’s say during the course of their day, when they noticed one particular manufacturer’s products needing attention they knew it was up to them to address the matter without having to be told.

If we apply this analogy to the lives of believers, most of whom are forever asking God what they are supposed to do next, it might be easy to see where the problem lies. Like the employee with the PDA, God has provided His children with access to an image, which will give them the understanding of what it means to be a son of God. Adam was created with this image, but he lost it the moment he sinned. We have access to this image once we are born again. However, because we were not created, as Adam was, but instead born into God’s family as sons, we must undergo a process for the development of this image in us. (II Corinthians 3:18)

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (transformed) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The obvious question then is, “What is the glory being described here?” We can find the answer to that question in the book of John. (John 1:14)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

As we behold His glory, the glory of being the Son of God, which is found in the scriptures, we are being transformed into the same image, the image of a son of God. God **created** Adam in His image as a son, we are reborn into God's family as sons, but our souls must be transformed into this image. Adam needed no transformation because he was the full package from the beginning.

God was able to instantly put Adam in charge of his own planet, with very brief, and general instructions. The rest was up to Adam. Yes, God and Adam must have communed with one another regularly, and probably instantly if Adam chose. But, to think God had already choreographed Adam's entire existence and Adam had to be told every action to take, is wrong. On the contrary, it appears that Adam's freedom to choose what to do was limitless up to the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16-17)

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’ ”

So, with all this freedom, God knew that Adam would need a guide to follow which could show Adam what it meant to be a son of God, what a son of God could do, and the authority in being a son of God, especially since none had ever existed. Take this verse, for instance. (Genesis 1:28)

“...Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

Adam understood the concept of what it meant to have dominion without one day of schooling. How was that possible? Not only did Adam comprehend a very difficult concept like dominion, but Adam also understood dominion as a son of God and not a tyrant.

Likewise, with only a few days of training, my employees were assigned at least two stores to take care of with hundreds of manufacturers in each store for which they were responsible. Adam followed the “image” within and my employees followed the “image” presented to them by the PDA. In both cases, even when no specific instructions were given, they always had something they could follow; the “image”. The Word of God is our source for the “image” we are to follow.

As long as my employees chose to act responsibly within the established boundaries and kept their stores looking nice I really did not care what specific

tasks they were performing at any given time. I certainly never hired a person whom I thought would be calling me every minute of the day asking me what to do next, or someone who stayed in their cars and slept, which brings me to the type of person I usually hired. They had to be honest, hardworking and pleasant people. This speaks to the nature of the people I hired.

Let's understand the difference between "nature" and "image" in God's kingdom. "Nature" has to do with being born with the attributes that make a child of God a child of God. For example a dog is a dog because he is born a dog and not a cat. His nature is to be a dog and chase cars and bark. A dog doesn't purr because it is not in his nature.

In contrast, the "image" provides more depth of understanding about what is expected of an individual because they are this unique person and what they are to do as such.

Take my dog, Cash, for instance. He was born with a dog nature from the start so he naturally does dog things. But, when he became my dog, what Cash did not have initially was the "image" of what it meant to be Mark's dog. Cash had no idea what my expectations were. He only had a nature that told him how to be a dog, in a general sense. I had to instill within Cash the "image" of being specifically my dog. After 7 years, Cash has a working image of being Mark's dog, but that doesn't mean he always follows that image. So, the "nature" is what made Cash a dog in the first place and the "image" was what eventually turned Cash into Mark's dog.

Referring back to my employees, the nature of someone I chose to hire was that of a person I believed to be honest, hardworking and reliable. Once they were hired and began to be acclimated to following their PDA, their actions gradually changed to match those outlined by the PDA. After a while, these people would know what to do next because they had transformed into the "image" presented to them by the PDA. If they saw one of their products out to place, without instruction they would simply put it where it belonged.

Let me leave you with this thought until the next lesson. The job title I hired employees for was called a "merchandiser". Let's say the image on that PDA was called "the merchandiser's image". At the beginning, a new employee spent a lot of time looking to that PDA to guide them throughout their workday. As time progressed, the "merchandiser's image" seemed to transfer from the PDA to the person to the point that their actions matched the PDA without even having to look. They had "transformed" into the same "image" from glory to glory. They had become merchandisers. What we want is to look into the Word of God and

be “transformed” into the same “image”, the “image” of **being** a son of God, from glory to glory.

~ Grace be with you

Mark Jenkins