

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Romans 8:28-30.**

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. [29] For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; [30] and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

B. A few true stories:

1. ("Betty") causing trouble in Sunday school by being argumentative, offensive, and combative.*
2. ("Frank") wanting his own way on everything, even to the point of asking the elders to resign.*
3. (Elders) of a congregation that changed the locks to keep the preacher out and fire him.*
4. (Members) of a church that withheld their contributions to starve the preacher out.*
5. (Committee) who usurped the elders' authority and split the church, fired the preacher.*
6. (Preacher) who drew disciples after himself, caused trouble; heartache, and division.*
7. (Husband) who is selfish with money for his wife and kids.*
8. (Wife) who was a flirt, ending up with another man; her husband, herself, and son not faithful.*

C. All of these people have *forgotten the most important thing.

D. The most important thing is: to live a Christ-like life. A life conformed to the image of X.

II. THE BOTTOM LINE IS HOLINESS.

A. God wants us to be conformed into the image of His Son. This was his predetermined plan from the beginning (see Rom. 8:29).

B. Doctrine is fine--it has its place. It is important to believe only what the Bible teachers. But, as important as doctrine is, I don't believe it's the most important thing! (Eph. 4:17-24; esp. 4:20).

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, [18] being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; [19] and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. [20] But you did not learn Christ in this way, [21] if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, [22] that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, [23] and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, [24] and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

C. There are even times when doctrine won't work. Remember what Peter told Xian wives with unbelieving husbands? Many times family are the most difficult people to reach. What can you do to influence their lives? Live the Xian life. It's the best weapon you have! (1Pet. 3:1,2).

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, [2] as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

D. Our learning of doctrine should have a purpose--to be more like X. Our growing and maturing in knowledge should cause us to be like Jesus (Eph. 4:14,15).

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; [15] but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him, who is the head, *even* Christ,

III. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NO MYSTERY.

A. This is not difficult! Some look for a mystical element in their walk of faith to find the secret of Xian living. But the mystery of godliness, righteousness, and holiness is explained in X (Col. 1:25-27).

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the *preaching* of the word of God, [26] *that is*, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, [27] to whom God willed to

make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

- B. Many sincere people are looking to some super-natural experience with the HS to make them feel more spiritual. But to know the depths and treasures of God is to know X--not the Spirit (Col. 2:2,3). *that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*
- C. Let me tell you the truth...
 - 1. I don't care if we ever remodel the building--that's not important.
 - 2. I don't care if we ever buy a new van--that's not important.
 - 3. And, as badly as I want to grow, I don't care if we ever have 130 or 1,330--that's not important.
- D. What is important--that every member of this church live a Christ-like life (Col. 3:4). *When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*
- E. Low attendance is not as discouraging to me as sin, division, hatred, and an unX-like lifestyle in our church family. I can tolerate many things from people, but "sin in the camp" destroys me.
- F. Conversely, what is encouraging would be to see the change that Jesus is making in your life. Let me see results like faithfulness, kindness, godliness, patience, and any other X-like attribute.
- G. When I see people growing spiritually, and it reflects in their lives--then we are becoming the success that Jesus wants us to be. Living a X-like life is the most important thing.

IV. THE REAL GOAL IS TO KNOW CHRIST.

- A. My grandmother, God rest her soul, told me many times, "Go preach X to them." She was right!
- B. The apostle Paul was determined (focused) on one thing--X and Him crucified (1Cor. 2:2). *For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*
- C. Power, popularity, prestige, position, and pride are nothing as compared to knowing X (Phil. 3:8-11). *More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, [9] and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, [10] that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; [11] in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*
- D. Paul could out argue any Jew, Gentile, Roman, or Greek. Yet, all he wanted was to know X. He wanted to know the power his indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). *who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.*
- E. It is time to be transformed and conformed.
 - 1. Conformed not to the pattern of this world--but into the likeness of God's Son. Holy, acceptable, sacrificial, good, and mature (Rom. 12:1,2). *I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*
 - 2. Transformation means:
 - a. Rethinking every thought.
 - b. Redoing every action.
 - c. Re-planning every scheme.
 - d. Redirecting every goal.
 - e. Reorganizing every priority.
 - f. Reviewing every decision you make.
 - 3. Transformation means:
 - a. A new standard (to measure right and wrong).
 - b. A new agenda (to live by).
 - c. A new goal (for which to dream and plan).
 - 4. Transformation means:
 - a. Beholding the X to become like Him (2Cor. 3:18).

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

- b. Conforming your entire being--body, mind, and soul into the likeness of X (see Rom. 8:29).

V. CONCLUSION.

- A. What needs to happen with the people in the Introduction?
 - 1. ("Betty") needs to learn to love people (as Jesus did), not argue with them.
 - 2. ("Frank") needs to work with people (as Jesus did), not against them.
 - 3. (Elders) need to nurture and teach their preachers (as Jesus did with the apostles).
 - 4. (Congregation) need to learn to give with a heart of compassion (as Jesus did).
 - 5. (Committee) needs to learn to respect authority (as Jesus did).
 - 6. (Preacher) needs to learn to equip the saints for ministry (as Jesus did the apostles).
 - 7. (Husband) needs to love his wife and children as X loved the church.
 - 8. (Wife) needs to be submissive to her husband, as to the Lord (like Jesus did to the Father).
- B. They all, like we, must remember the most important thing--a X-like life.

VI. INVITATION.

- A. The sermon is over, and it's invitation time. It's not a matter of:
 - 1. Who is right and who is wrong.
 - 2. Who is stronger and who is weaker.
 - 3. Who has the most money, talent, or opportunities.
- B. It's matter of who will become like X by repenting:
 - 1. Of evil words spoken.
 - 2. Of evil thoughts entertained.
 - 3. Of a bad attitude.
 - 4. Of stubbornness and selfishness.
 - 5. Of conduct unbecoming a Xian.
 - 6. Of greed, idolatry, covetousness.
 - 7. Of apathy, ignorance, and laziness.
 - 8. Of any specific sin.
- C. Who will humble themselves and admit that their life has omitted the most important thing?
- D. The invitation stands for those who want to be what God wants to be--like His Son, JC.
- E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.